Mother Frances Scherver

A Sketch of her Life and Character

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VEN. MOTHER FRANCES SCHERVIER.

THE VENERABLE

MOTHER FRANCES SCHERVIER,

FOUNDRESS OF THE CONGREGATION
OF THE SISTERS OF THE POOR
OF ST. FRANCIS.

A Sketch of her Life and Character.

BY THE

Very Rev. Ignatius Jeiler, O. S. F., D. D.

"This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did."
Acts IX. 36.

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION.
BY
REV. BONAVENTURE HAMMER, O. S. F.

With a Preface by the Rt. Rev. C. M. Maes, Bishop of Covington, Ky.

Permissu Superiorum.

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TO OUR BELOVED FATHER IN CHRIST,

THE MOST REVEREND

WILLIAM HENRY ELDER, D. D.,

Archbishop of Cincinnati, Ohio,

This Record of the Life, Labors and Virtues of their sainted Mother and Foundress is most respectfully and humbly dedicated

by the Least of His Children,

The Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis.

PREFACE.

Biography will ever be the most popular form for acquiring knowledge of virtue, just as experimental philosophy is the only practical way to interest, in deeper study, the average mind.

The formal text book of science may be a mine of intellectual wealth, but its abstruse terms and recondite methods make its study a laborious task. Put the boy in the class of an enthusiastic professor, who with wealth of illustration brings home to his gaze, as well as to his intellect, the entrancing results of the application of dry principles, and you have created a new scientist.

So with soul-life and its methods of sanctification. The manual of mystical theology, even the book of spiritual reading, is apt to weary, if not repel, that grown-up child: the people. But bring to its attention the daily life of a woman of our own times, who has made the evangelical counsels the rule of her every day life, who has charmed her contemporaries with the attractiveness of her manifold virtues, who has made religion respected and piety a practical school of charity, and you have gained its good will and brought home to the understanding of rich and poor the possibility of a saintly life.

That is what the biographer of Mother Frances has done in a "Life" which must prove all the more attractive to Catholic readers from the fact that her own words, as well as her works, appeal to their interest and imitation.

With what eagerness will not young girls, who are aware of the fact that they are called to a religious life, read the interesting story of that energetic young lady's vocation? At first, the call of the God of Charity, who claims them as His brides, becomes a source of suffering for themselves and for their relations. Obstacles without number tempt them not to listen to the voice of duty. It is difficult to resist the powerful appeals of natural affection, which has God-given rights upon the heart!

In the recital of the obstacles which Frances so nobly overcame, and of the trials she so patiently bore, they will find an example of generosity worthy of the imitation of great souls. Miss Schervier's father, the public spirited and respected citizen, whose influence would have prevented any community of Aix la Chapelle from admitting his daughter, persistently refused his consent. The untoward circumstance of her mother's untimely death seemed to preclude the possibility of her ever attaining the wish of her heart. Frances' position of elder Sister made it appear cruel, to worldly eyes, even to attempt to leave younger brothers and sisters. Her friends, good Catholics in the estimation of the world, severely rebuked her for daring to think of leaving a widowed father. Yea, the poisoned darts of slander filled, with doubt and anguish, the heart of the pure young maiden, who, unconscious of malice or evil, eagerly alleviated the sufferings of almost despairing souls, victims of man's lust and selfishness. But she braved all, to follow Jesus Christ

and become worthy of Him. She overcame all, to wear out her life in the service of the poor and the sick.

How powerfully does not that life of charity appeal to the better impulses of human nature, even among worldly minded Catholics and bigoted Protestants! After having read that modern story of humility and self-sacrifice, of charity and zeal, who will have the heart to turn away from his door a Sister of the Poor of St. Francis? In the very garb, upon which Mother Frances has shed so much lustre; in the same spirit of self-denial, which animated the Foundress in the accomplishment of so stupendous a work of charity, both in Europe and in America, she comes to ask alms for her poor. Who could deny himself the pleasure of giving to the humble daughters of such a Mother?

Their hospitals are multiplying as fast as the miseries of poor human nature. In them, the spiritual daughters of Mother Frances are bestowing a charity which the world does not know, and which the average population of our poverty- and crime-stricken American cities does not understand. —Their day's work begins long before daylight; two hours have been spent in devotional exercises, before their patients awaken to another day of misery. It only ends, after every inmate of their hospitable homes has been provided with all the comforts which ingenious charity can invent to make the sufferers' night as painless as possible. Then, the Sisters rest their weary limbs on a narrow cot of straw; and it affords them a better night's repose, than the tenants of downy

couches would deem it possible to enjoy. But, even then, some of the Sisters discount the seven hours of sleep to attend during the night to the stricken patients. They glide, like unto ministering angels from bed to bed, and, unreasonable and petulant as sick people are apt to be, those nurses of the poor know how to comfort all.

Yet, this is the least part of their charitable work!

Who can fittingly speak of the spiritual charity bestowed by these true Sisters of the Poor! How many a despairing mind has been comforted by the soothing words of hope which the attending Sister brought home to her charge with divine assurance of forgiveness and divine love! Ah! who knows of the bleeding hearts, whom a cruel world had pierced with its shafts of persecution and contempt, after it had abused their most generous impulses, who have found a healing balm in the commiserating devotedness of these self-denying spouses of the Crucified! How many, who under stress of poverty and neglect had wandered for years through a cold and heartless world, without Christian cheer or religious knowledge, have found in the comfortable wards of our Catholic hospitals, not only an alleviation in the deathly sickness which excess and sin had brought upon their broken down bodies, but light and grace. Through the charity of the ministering Sister, they recognize the value of their soul, they appreciate the mercy of a Divine Redeemer, they sincerely deplore the sad errors of their youth, and they return to their God with as much hope and faith in His fatherly forgiveness, as wondering

sorrow for their ignorance and past indifference to His existence!

The soothing hand of the Sister of St. Francis smooths the fevered brow of the malignant scoffer, who invented the malicious ravings of a loathsome mind with which he aspersed her good name in the daily press. That forgiving hand moistens the parched lips of the blasphemous rounder, who reviled and slandered her pure life, because he lived in a world where purity and decency could not be understood by a degraded humanity impatient of self-restraint. Her imploring hands are daily lifted in pious and charitable supplication, not only for the one who crossed its palm with the alms of charity, but for the heartless modern woman, who sneers at the brown habit of mortification, because she grovels too near the earth, to think of the possibility of the life of self-denial which the Sister of St. Francis leads.

And because Catholic *charity is*, like its Divine Author, *patient and kind, . . . seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, . . . beareth all things, . . . endureth all things and never faileth* (I. Cor. XIII. 1—7.) in the unobtrusive and humble Sister of the Poor, the world, which is not above the unthinking animal in comprehension of divine things, shrugs its shoulders in pity and passes on to its swill. Ah me! who are the strong ones in this world? Who are the brave heroes whose deeds please God and truly honor humanity? Are they the ones who step high and hold aloft their heads, who look down upon the humble and call them cowards, and dare be proud and sound

their own praises? I vow, there is more manliness under the cowl of the despised monk, than under the broadcloth frock of the bragging worldling; there is more heroism and strength under the patched cloak of the Franciscan nun, than under the silken doublet of the most generous lady of the world. Those timid doves of the Sanctuary of Christ, who shrink in alarm from the stare of the world, are the strong women who will face iniquity and dare impiety, to save souls of men!

Mere money-giving is not always charity. Stately hospitals with well-paid nurses are not the homes of true charity. All the unstinted appropriations, which the State may lavish upon the forsaken and suffering beneficiaries of its munificent institutions, do not yield a tittle of the grand charity lavished upon the inmates of the hospitals of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, built with the alms collected for Christ's sake from door to door.

Whence that immense charity, broad as the sea and deep as its abysses, exercised daily by the Daughters of Mother Frances in so Christ-like a manner? At what well did she drink so deeply of that God-given virtue?

Here is the secret of Catholic charity which reaches the very soul, as distinguished from natural benevolence and unsectarian humanitarianism, which thinks only of bodily relief. Whilst mingling with the world to make it yield its material wealth for the benefit of the poor, whilst ever busy in charitable work like a characteristic saint of this century of action, Mother Frances was at the same time an interior soul, a woman of prayer and meditation.

The principles of the interior life, so little understood by the world, are fully set forth in the biography which is now offered to the Catholic reading public. It can be followed, gradually growing, evolving and blossoming into fruit of daily action; hence, we need not develop that essential feature of Mother Frances' useful life.

Gentle reader, when you lay down this book, which is but a summary of the virtues credited to Mother Frances in the book of eternal life, thank God that such generous souls are occasionally vouchsafed to the world, that American suffering and want was blessed with a goodly share of its charitable fruit, and promise yourself the imperishable luxury of helping her Daughters to extend, to many of our cities, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis.

† CAMILLUS P. MAES,

Bp. of Covington.

COVINGTON, KY., Feast of St. Hilary,
January 14th, 1895.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The servant of God whose life and labors are related in the following pages, was called "a grand woman" by a prominent man not of her faith. He bestowed this title on her, probably in acknowledgment of her great achievements for the relief of the social misery with which the world is filled. Pressing necessities call for relief; a great field is open for charity. Amid great difficulties, Mother Frances devoted herself, in person and through her daughters, to ministering to the suffering poor and neglected sick. She appeared as an angel of consolation and help to innumerable sufferers in the filthy hovels of the poor, in the gloomy chambers of the sick, and in the infected wards of hospitals.

Social misery was amongst us from of old. Long before the disputes on the solution of the intricate and far-reaching social question began, this woman, destitute of visible means, extended far and wide her great work of relieving distress, thus proving the truth denied only by deluded minds — that great achievements can be accomplished not only on the public stage of the world, but also in secret, in the huts of poverty and in the hovels of misery.

We doubt not but that every reader of this history will regard this noble woman's heroic work for the relief of misery among the lower classes with feelings of admiration, and, perhaps, of confusion. At all events, we expect universal approval for applying to her in their full sense the words of Holy Scripture in regard to the pious

Tabitha cited on the title page. In our days, the social question has assumed a world-convulsing shape. For its solution, besides its material side, its moral aspect is of paramount importance. Without the renewal and strengthening of Christian faith, life, and charity there is no prospect of a regeneration of society, but rather of a revolution productive of blood and ruin. In such times it is without doubt desirable that the grand example of this noble woman should serve as an incitement to all, that each one in his sphere do what lies in his power for the prevention of the impending evil.

The true value of labor, in its moral aspect, does not so much depend on *what* is done, but rather on *how* it is done, that is, with what disposition, and from for what purpose. Trifling actions that proceed from great, unselfish charity are truly great; apparently great deeds springing from motives of ambition and self-love lose their significance and merit. With venerable Mother Frances wealth of interior life added supreme value to her ministrations. Heart and charity, not head and human motives were the source of her great sacrifices for others. Indeed, her heart was greater than her means, her charity purer and more wonderful than her achievements. Even the coarse, the uncultured among her poor and sick often felt and acknowledged this. They were moved and won, not so much by her services and gifts, as by the charity from which they proceeded.

Unselfish charity, having its source on high, is the vital principle of social life. The solution of the social question demands sacrifice, multiplied

sacrifice both on the part of the higher and of the lower classes. Their interests not only differ, but they often clash. Without sacrifice it is impossible to reconcile and equalize them peaceably, to bridge over the great gulf between wealth and poverty, and, as St. Bonaventure remarks, without unselfish charity magnanimous sacrifice is impossible.

Moral worth is greater before God than external achievements, grand and numerous though they may be. For this reason we have given greater attention in this history to the personality of its subject than to what she accomplished; we consider rather who she was, than what she did. And from this view, too, she may be called "a grand woman." Her personality was well defined, phenomenal, but above all she was a divinely favored, virtuous, Christian woman. Lowly in her humility, she appeared great in her charity.

Withal, it was not our intention to bespeak for her a chilling and sterile admiration, but rather to show the path in which she walked, and to incite to her imitation. Therefore we not only exhibited her as she was, but how she became such, — in affliction and combat, in prayer, tears and incessant sacrifice. No saint is born a perfect saint. They all become saints by degrees on the battlefield of life's internal and external struggles. This divine power of grace was brought to perfection in them by the faithful co-operation of their own free will. We are happily able to demonstrate, in great part, how, from her childhood, God guided and prepared this soul for her vocation, and how she, on her side, fought the good fight — watching and praying, striving and suffering, and making sacrifices.

We by no means intend to declare her a saint—it is not for us to do so. Much less do we assert that she never paid tribute to human weakness and blindness. Flawless perfection is an attribute of the saints in heaven; with the sole exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is wanting to even the greatest saints during their earthly pilgrimage. On the contrary, we took special pains to lay particular stress on those things in the life of this servant of God that bring her nearer to us, and can be practised more or less by all. Even trifles show us her spirit, therefore we did not omit them. The lives of the saints are sometimes written in a manner that places them far beyond our reach: there shall be no occasion to say this of our book. True, it contains some very extraordinary and wonderful occurrences, and, moreover, heroic acts of virtue not intended for the imitation of all; but on the whole, the servant of God is placed so near us, temporally and spiritually, that there is no excuse for us if we do not follow her example.

Though not portraying her as a saint, in the full acceptation of the term, we are on the other hand not content with calling her "a grand woman," without adding, "a Catholic woman." Catholicity of mind, Catholicity of heart in universal charity—this was her inmost nature. The root of her real greatness was a living Catholic faith, which is not only the "beginning, foundation and root of all justification" (Council of Trent, Sess. VI., ch. 8.), but as St. Bonaventure teaches, of every degree of holiness and supernatural illumination. (*Breviloq.* Prolog.) To such a high degree did her mind and

heart live in the Catholic Church, that Catholic doctrine and life appeared as it were incorporated in her, and that too, in a noble and pleasing form. Hence the great and favorable impression she made on non-Catholics who became acquainted with her. We trust the eye rather than the ear, and the present image of true virtue makes a greater impression than the most authentic description of the great achievements of the saints in by-gone times. Therefore it is useful and necessary that extraordinary virtue practised in our day, and, as it were, before our very eyes, though not surrounded by the splendor of miracles related in the lives of other saints, be not "hidden under the bushel" of obscurity.

This applies with greater force, because "the countenance of the Spouse" of Christ on earth "is veiled and uncomely" through the scandals of so many of her children. Who shall count the number of so-called Catholics that if they have withal preserved a decayed faith, show forth in broad day-light and before the eyes of all the world — not the least participation in the sanctity of the Church of Christ, but the total depravity of unregenerate nature, and who, by the dark shadow of their worldly lives, obscure to the ignorant the true figure of the Church of Christ? Experience proves that such caricatures of the true faith are for many, in and out of the Church, the greatest obstacle to the propagation of the kingdom of God. They are the dreadful "scandal" mentioned by Our Divine Saviour, continually growing until the day of judgment.

Would that we succeeded in portraying the luminous figure of this truly Catholic woman in such a manner as to impress the reader as she herself, during life, impressed great numbers. As far as our sources permitted, we let Mother Frances speak and act, and thereby characterize herself. But as instruction and edification is the object of our work, we deemed it necessary to add explanatory comments to her words and deeds. The ways of the interior life are not so generally known as to admit the presupposition of a true conception, intelligence and estimation of the deeds and principles related. Moreover, we sought to prove that the life and principles of the servant of God had their source in the well-spring of Catholic doctrine and asceticism.

The author undertook the work only after repeated requests, and with great reluctance, because his time and attention were due to other occupations. Finally, the declaration of the will of his Chief Superior ended all hesitation. In excuse for the defects of his work, the author begs leave to state that, owing to many obstacles and frequent interruptions it took him several years to complete it. His only wish is, that to the reader the book may, to some extent, be productive of the same blessings that Mother Frances was wont to dispense, by her very presence, wherever she went.

College of St. Bonaventure, Quaracchi, Italy,
February 3rd, 1893.

THE AUTHOR.

SOURCES.

1. Our first source is the account written in obedience by Mother Frances herself, at the beginning of the sixties. Rev. Lambert Bethmann, pastor of the Germans in Havre, to whom she had manifested her conscience, united with her then confessor, a Franciscan Father, to induce her to overcome her reluctance. They succeeded only when they commanded her in obedience. How seriously she took this task is shown by the fact, that at that time she had a Mass said every Saturday for the intention that she might write only the truth and for the glory of God. On the same day, she reserved two hours for this task. She kept the account strictly secret. As far as we know, the only person to whom she confided it was a prominent Superior of the Franciscan Order, whom she was wont to consult with special confidence when opportunity offered. However, when by a change of confessors, she was released from this duty, she sought to regain possession of her manuscript in order to commit it to the flames. So fervently did she beg for its return, weeping and on her knees, that the priest deemed it advisable to console her by complying with her request — not, however, before having the manuscript copied without her knowledge, and thus preserving it from destruction. The original having been destroyed by its writer, she died in the conviction that posterity would know little or nothing of her interior life.

From this account are taken the contents of our First Book, and the first chapters of the Second. With the exception of a few circumstances, and some abbreviations, her own words are given. The order, however, was often changed, because one and the same circumstance was mentioned in different places of her story. The originality of the account did not suffer by this proceeding.

Mother Frances prefaced her memoranda by the following introduction, which we quote in full:

J. M. J., Fr. and Cl.!

Today, on the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Victories, and of the feast of our holy Seraphic Father St. Francis, which feasts this year beautifully occur on the same day, I fulfil for the first time the command of obedience, to make confessions in a spirit of penance, concerning the inception and the life of the Congregation, and which, at the same time, relate to my own interior life.

O my most bountiful Saviour! could I but announce Thy mercies in a manner somewhat worthy of Thee, and at the same time make known the abyss of my lowliness, unfaithfulness and ingratitude!

Holy Mother of God, and my Mother! Holy Father Francis, from whose imitation my tepidity and unfaithfulness have caused me to depart so far, of whose love and affection I made myself so unworthy by my sins—show yourself magnanimous towards me, take holy revenge on me! The farther I departed from you to my ruin, the nearer to me be now to my salvation! Regard with eyes of

mercy a poor, sorrowful child, returning to you with all my heart, and desiring for the time to come nothing but to obey the will of God in all things, and to merit His approbation. To attain this I have much need of your assistance, especially for the fulfilment of holy obedience in this matter.

Therefore I confidently kneel before you, consecrating to you anew heart and mind with special reference to the fulfilment of this duty, and asking your blessing on it.

2. As Mother Frances believed this first account destroyed, her archbishop, now Cardinal Melchers, to whom she had manifested her heart in confession, directed her about the beginning of the seventies, to write her recollections concerning the origin of the Congregation. She obeyed, and had her manuscript copied for the archbishop by a Sister, who was pledged to the strictest secrecy. This Sister tells us, that when she handed the manuscript to Mother Frances, she seemed quite abashed, and avoided her with downcast eyes for several weeks, so that the Sister felt greatly aggrieved. This second account is identical with the first as far as the facts related are concerned, but it is somewhat shorter, and Mother Frances speaks in the third person.

3. Another prolific source were some hundred letters of Mother Frances, originals and copies, the most important of which are those written in Schleswig-Holstein and in America, and some addressed to the above-mentioned Franciscan relating to her interior life. Most of these letters are on business affairs and hastily written, but

there are few of them that do not contain a short spiritual instruction or exhortation.

4. For the Second Book and the concluding chapters of the Third Book the detailed and well written Annals of the Congregation were of great service. They begin with 1845, and are prefaced by a short account of the early years of Mother Frances.

5. Finally, we received a great many communications, oral and written, from Sisters and other persons. Of these we availed ourselves as far as we deemed them important.

The author was privileged to receive the confidences of Mother Frances during the last eight years of her life, though not in the capacity of confessor or spiritual director. He assisted her in obtaining the approval of Rome for the Constitutions, and preached several retreats in the motherhouse, and thus became intimately acquainted with her.

The extensive material was not collected and arranged to form a faithful and conscientious narrative without difficulty. Conformably to the Decree of Pope Urban VIII. we add the express declaration, that we claim only historical credence for everything we say concerning the virtues of Mother Frances, and certain extraordinary occurrences related in her life.

Translator's Note.

To make a faithful translation, and to give, as far as possible, the author's sense in his own words, was the task imposed on the translator when he consented to undertake to render this beautiful work into English. How far he has succeeded is not for him to say; but he begs leave to state that, when necessary, he preferred to sacrifice style rather than change the wording or arrangement of the original.

The best of translations are but translations; therefore we trust our readers will rather fix their eyes upon the portrait of the noble life and character presented to their view than upon the frame in which it is enshrined.

La Fayette, Ind., December 3, 1894.

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THE VENERABLE MOTHER FRANCES SCHERVIER.

BOOK I.

EARLY YEARS OF MOTHER FRANCES.

Preparation for her future Vocation.

CHAPTER I.

Her Birth, Family and Baptism.

1. Frances Schervier, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis was born in the ancient imperial city of Aix la Chapelle, on the 3d of January, 1819. John Henry Caspar Schervier, proprietor of a needle manufactory, and associate magistrate of the city, was her father. On the 28th of May, 1807, he married Mary Gertrude Teresa Priem. She died on the 19th of May, 1808, leaving him a daughter by the name of Mary Elisabeth. He contracted a second marriage with Mary Louisa Migeon, the mother of our saintly Frances. Besides her, she had six other children, three boys, one of whom died shortly after birth, and three girls. The elder brother, Louis Henry, survived the rest of the family. The younger, born on the 28th of September, 1815, became an excellent priest, whom God called to his reward on the 21st of April, 1861. Two daughters, both unmarried, followed their mother to an early grave. Their mother died on the 22d of February, 1832, the elder daughter Mary on the 17th of June, 1833, and within a month, on the 12th of July of the same year, death claimed also Mary Julia Ottilia. The youngest daughter, Mary Christina Paulina, born on the 4th of August, 1820, a noble, self-sacrificing soul, emulated her sister Frances in the exercise of every virtue, and, on the 12th of August, 1851, entered the Congregation founded by her. She died a happy death as early as the 1st of December, 1855.

The education of these children in the bosom of the family was notable for Christian discipline and salutary restraint, the influence whereof can be traced through all the various phases of the life of Mother Frances.

2. Her father was held in great esteem by his fellow-citizens, and was well deserving of their respect because of his honorable character and the great sacrifices he made for the welfare of the community. He had ample opportunity to demonstrate his public spirit in his position as associate magistrate of a large city that had suffered considerably by the ravages of the French revolution and by years of war, and so devoted was he to the public welfare, that his private enterprises suffered not a little thereby. As proprietor of a large manufacturing establishment he took the greatest interest also in the welfare of his employes. At that time, educational facilities in the schools of Aix la Chapelle were rather limited; therefore he founded and maintained at his own expense a school, destined in the first place for his employes, which was frequented by over one hundred children. As to himself, he was a faithful Catholic, punctual in the duties imposed by the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, insisting that no member of his household should neglect them, and permitting no religious or moral disorder.

3. All accounts relating to the mother of the subject of this sketch agree in praising her as a most excellent woman of gentle character and amiable heart, who attended with the greatest fidelity to her duties as mistress of the house, as

mother and as tutoress. Her prudence, tact and charity in the education of her children are best shown by the fact that her step-daughter learned only shortly before her marriage that she who had been loved and honored by her as her real mother, was only her step-mother. Frances seems to have inherited her mother's best qualities and virtues.

Mrs. Schervier was a native of France, and descended from a respectable wealthy and religious family. In baptism, she received the names of Mary Louisa Victoria. Born on the 30th of September, 1781, near Charleville, Department of the Ardennes, she was the youngest daughter of Vivien Migeon, who, with his family, suffered a great deal for the faith during the French revolution. With his wife and youngest daughter he was imprisoned, and only the death of Robespierre saved them from becoming victims of the guillotine. It was in prison that Mary Louisa Victoria received her first Communion.

4. Let us return to the early years of Frances. She received her name, since become venerable by the virtues of a true daughter of St. Francis, in the following manner. In 1818, the emperors of Austria and Russia, and the king of France, met in convention at Aix la Chapelle. During his sojourn the emperor of Austria, Francis, desired to be shown through Mr. Schervier's needle manufactory, and though coming *incognito*, the employes gave him a royal reception. He expressed himself so well pleased, that Mrs. Schervier felt encouraged to ask him to become sponsor of the child she was then expecting. The emperor most graciously

granted her request, naming the Rev. Anthony William Deboeur, canon of Aix la Chapelle, as his deputy for the occasion. Hence the child received the name of Frances in baptism. Canon Deboeur henceforth was an intimate friend, and, in later years, an inmate of Mr. Schervier's family. For his godchild he ever afterwards evinced a truly paternal affection.

5. To be the godchild of an emperor is regarded as an extraordinary favor, but compared with what God Himself grants in baptism, it is but a transitory, vain shadow. By regeneration in water and the Holy Ghost, the Great King of heaven and earth exalts the poor mortal to the greater than imperial dignity of a true child of God and heir of the heavenly kingdom, and endows him in creative mercy with powers and privileges greatly transcending all natural gifts. True, for a time these endowments remain inactive germs of divine life in the child's heart. Happy the child that grows to learn his dignity, rights and duties, and not only retains his baptismal grace, but, co-operating freely with new graces, develops the germs into blossoms and fruits of light, into practices and virtues worthy of God; sowing the seed here below in tears, producing the fruits of a godly life in hope and patience, to harvest them in eternity. Only when the hand of God transplants His child out of the night of mortal life into the broad daylight of eternity, and transforms his spirit to a full likeness of Christ (II. Cor. III. 18), will the inestimable value of baptismal grace become manifest.

CHAPTER II.

Childhood.—External and Interior Trials.—General Remarks on Religious Vocation.

1. The children's home education was careful, and far from effeminate. Their father insisted on obedience and order, and their mother watched zealously lest anything defile their purity, or develop a spirit of self-sufficiency in them. Concerning this, Frances writes: "Educated in the French fashion, we were rarely allowed to go out, except to church and school, and then, as a rule, only in company of our parents or of an old servant in whom they placed implicit trust. She was a Walloon, and had been our nurse. Even after we girls were grown, association with female friends was permitted to us only in presence of our parents. Our mother and the nurse, not speaking German fluently, used French in their conversation with us. If mother was obliged to converse with the servants or others, I generally had to act as interpreter."

2. To school Frances was sent as a day-pupil to the institute of St. Leonard, a boarding-school presided over by Madam Nicolay. Between the years 1827 and 1832, the celebrated convert, Miss Louisa Hensel, noted for her piety and poetical talent, was chief teacher of this school. She imbued her pupils with her own spirit of piety, and the greater number of them adhered in after life to the sentiments instilled into them during their early years. Many of them chose the religious life. But Miss Hensel herself never attained it, though it

was the object of her most ardent desire from the moment of her conversion to the end of her life. Two of her pupils became foundresses of religious Congregations, namely Paulina von Mallinkrodt of the Sisters of Christian Charity, and Clara Fey of the Sisters of the Divine Infant. Frances Schervier, the third foundress graduating from that school, was not really a pupil of Miss Hensel, who taught the higher classes, and left before Frances was promoted to them.

3. Accounts of relatives, friends and acquaintances inform us that from her earliest years Frances was conspicuous for all those virtues that are childhood's ornament; that she was a source of joy to her parents and teachers; that her modesty, piety and reserve, her affability and charity won the hearts of all who knew her. Some of her characteristic features at this time are mentioned as follows:

4. Up to late in her girlhood, and when already at the head of all her school-mates, she retained a fondness for dolls. At home, when learning her lessons, her doll would be at her side, and she thus presented a picture of that motherliness that characterized her ever afterwards. She was greatly attached to flowers, and favored the honeysuckle, probably because she had been taught the verses she was wont to repeat on seeing one:

> "O floweret chaste and undefiled,
> My soul from thee absorbs
> A glance of love—how sweet and mild!
> From my dear Jesus' orbs."

5. Frances was of a lively and cheerful disposition, and rather prone to laughter. This latter

inclination caused her many a struggle in later years. Attentive observers, however, found her to be, in reality, grave, serious, reflective and silent. One of her teachers relates that little Frances, even during play-time, was usually so serious and preoccupied, that her behavior even then portended higher things. This reflective introspection was caused by interior conflicts and trials, which made her spiritual vision behold images far removed from the bustle of the world. She gives an account of these conditions of her soul, though she then, and even afterwards, seems not to have fully comprehended them. In fact, the foundation of the development of her interior life was laid during her childhood. What she relates of certain phases of her soul-life in those years, explains many peculiar features of her after life. As we intend to show not only who she was and what she accomplished, but, as far as available sources allow, how she became who and what she was by God's assisting guidance, we deem it expedient to preface her own account by a few general observations, to assist the reader to a clearer comprehension, and to prevent misunderstandings.

6. God, in order to prepare Frances for her life's work, had gifted her in a singular manner with noble qualities of nature. Her mind and heart were endowed with all the virtues peculiar to the female sex, whilst the usual frailties of women were not noticeable in her. By nature, her heart was most tender, and so magnanimous, that to forget self and to cause joy to others was a necessity to her. With an instinctive sense of what

was becoming, she was remarkable for virginal modesty and reserve. Her dealings with others showed a candid, obliging benevolence, affability and charity, winning all hearts as by a secret charm. On the other hand these qualities were supplemented by manly firmness of character, rare self-dependence and quick perception, by a decision and courage that recoiled at no obstacle or danger when there was question of duty. Withal, the noble qualities of womanly virtue predominated in her. She kept the strong features of her character within the bounds of female propriety, her affability and sweetness of conduct overbalancing them.

7. But in fallen human nature the most excellent endowments, devoid of the healing and elevating grace of Our Saviour, are neither sufficient for salvation, nor insured against abuse, infection and disintegration. They are powerless to resist severe temptations; and but too often great natural accomplishments are of themselves an impulse to great faults, causing their possessor to fall into the deepest abysses of wickedness. Experience proves that persons gifted with the greatest natural abilities often go astray deplorably. The deepest abysses are next to the loftiest mountains; the noblest wine turns into the strongest vinegar; the purest angel after his fall becomes the foulest demon.

Frances, the highly gifted child, could not have escaped by her own efforts the many dangers by which she was beset, had not Our Divine Saviour's grace guarded, assisted and protected her. By it she perfected her good dispositions, and converted them gradually and not without severe trials into

true virtues, recognized as such by God. To her, the mild hand of Providence guiding her soul from youth up, remained concealed; but to us it is unmistakably visible in the effects and fruits which it led her to bring forth.

8. In this connection, we must not forget her special vocation to found a new religious Congregation. For this, she needed a special preparation. An instrument in God's hand, she was to be the spiritual mother of numerous daughters; she was to imbue them with her own spirit, lead them on to a higher life, and initiate them in all the practices of religious observance. Now, a religious Order in the sense of the Church differs widely from a promiscuous society for the relief of distress, and for external ministrations. Its object above all is to form its members to the spiritual life. Religious must be trained to perform their external work and to offer their external sacrifices in the spirit of God, and not from purely human motives, so that they "walk as children of light; for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, justice and truth." (Ephes. V. 8, 9.) "It is the spirit that quickeneth." (John VI. 64.); for according to Catholic doctrine even the most laudable works for the benefit of mankind have no intrinsic value for eternity without the interior, operating spirit of God. In its true conception, the religious state must not be an association for the purpose of external activity alone, but must be animated above all by interior life emanating from a higher source, which is, as it were, the life-spring of society. The greatest difficulty in founding an Order is not to compose

beautiful rules, or to collect members, but to imbue those called with a higher spirit, which both sanctifies their souls and attains the special objects of the Order. And for this very reason the vocation to found an Order in its true sense can be given by nobody to himself: God chooses and forms His instruments for this purpose.

9. Frances, as foundress of a religious Congregation, had first to receive from God, what she was to communicate later to her spiritual daughters. She had first to learn by her own experience the ways of the interior life in order to be able to teach them to others. For this purpose, she was sent early to the school of the cross, that is, of interior trials and temptations, and thus led to a knowledge, scarcely credible in one of her age and circumstances, of her weakness, sinfulness and need of redemption. Loved, and often applauded for her beautiful traits of character during the years when reason began to dawn, she, according to her own expression, held herself to be the most wicked and sinful child on earth. Usually she was considered eminently adapted to active life, and unable to live without continual application to external employment; but in the child's mind already burned a consuming desire for a strictly retired, solely contemplative religious life, to be led in severest penance, because, as she thought, the most exacting penitential Order would be insufficient for the atonement of what she regarded her great sins. Surrounded by the comforts of a family of the higher classes, the child felt an unaccountable love for the poor, and moreover for

poverty, which latter can truthfully be said to be despised, feared and hated by all the world. These peculiar feelings and inclinations of the child's heart evidently were germs implanted by God, whence her future interior and exterior life was to be developed.

10. Here occurs the question, how the Divine Sower sowed the seeds into the child's heart, in other words, by what means the Divine Master led this soul into the school of the interior life. The account which Frances wrote of her early years sufficiently indicates that God permitted her to be assailed early by severe temptations and interior trials which she did not comprehend, and that He elevated her by strong influences of grace out of the depressing feeling of innate sinfulness and need of redemption to an intimate union with the Saviour, in Whom alone is to be found deliverance and salvation for our burdened and heavily-laden race.

11. Moreover her account insinuates, (what may appear incredible to such as have little experience in the manifold ways of divine guidance), that the child's first serious trial, and the source of great and grave apprehensions, were temptations to sins of which she, in her innocence, had no knowledge, namely to sins of impurity. Such temptations and storms usually assail persons at a later age, and as a rule are unknown to childhood, except when depraving external influences are at work. With Frances it was otherwise. She was able to relate of herself, that after her first Communion, which she received in her tenth year, she was, as a rule, free from such temptations, although in the exercise of her

charitable work, she was almost in daily contact with the outcasts of her sex. Just the contrary was the case in her very early years, despite the strict vigilance of her parents, who did not permit visits even from girls of her own age, and scrupulously kept from her all influence of improper company, or books. Moreover, she had a natural horror of everything base, and could in truth say of herself that God had bestowed on her abundantly the gift of modesty, in which she had a powerful help against faults of this kind. How sensitive the child was in this respect is shown by an incident, which she relates herself, as follows:

12. A good, middle-aged seamstress, who often came to her parents' house to sew, dearly loved the child, and would sometimes caress her. Once, when she had fervently embraced and kissed Frances, the latter felt very uneasy. "I retired," she writes, "to the attic of our house, where I might kneel unperceived, and there amid many tears besought Our Lord to grant me pardon. Only after I had been engaged thus for an hour, I was consoled. Then I promised never again to permit those demonstrations of affection. This cost me not a little, as I did not wish to offend the good woman, who meant nothing wrong, and did not understand my objections. She called me silly and bigoted. But with the help of God I kept my promise."

That these temptations, by which she was assailed for a time before her first Communion, were, if not solely caused, at least intensified by an excessive scrupulosity, appears from her own words. She

relates that she resisted sensual imaginations with painful conscientiousness, and that in her ninth year she dared not look at the most innocent picture, even if it represented a sacred object, for fear she might cause an impure thought.

In fact, no age, no place, no condition and no virtue on earth is secure against the assaults of temptation, because, as the Apostle, (Ephes. VI. 12.) says, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood," but also against the spirits of darkness; and temptations often arise when and where, according to human judgment, they are least expected. Thus the great St. Liguori, in his ninetieth year, after a life of angelic purity, was assailed by violent temptations of the flesh: obviously for the reason that by a glorious victory over them he should add to his crown the last perfection.

13. We must never forget that the saints, even souls replete from childhood with extraordinary grace, are not born as perfect saints, but that they must strive to become such amid many trials and combats, and, sometimes, not without being wounded. Temptations and consolations follow each other in constant alternation, as Thomas a Kempis says: "I am accustomed to visit my elect, says the Lord, in two ways, by trial and by combat. And I read them daily two lessons; one to rebuke their vices, the other to exhort them to the increase of virtues." And for our consolation he adds elsewhere: "Neither is it an illusion that sometimes thou art rapt into an ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed weakness of the heart. For these thou rather sufferest against thy

will, than procurest; and as long as thou art displeased with them, and dost resist them, it is merit, and not loss."

CHAPTER III.

Her own account of her spiritual life in childhood.

1. Considering the following account according to the views presented in the foregoing chapter, we cannot but acknowledge that God took this child into His school at an early period, and prepared her, by the influence of His grace, for great things. At the same time we see that God took occasion from the faults common to ignorance and thoughtlessness in childhood, to form in her a contrite and humble heart, the essential condition to receive future graces.

"Looking back," she writes, "on my past life from earliest childhood, I perceive, on my part, a great inclination to evil, from which serious unfaithfulness resulted; and on the part of God inconceivable graces and proofs of His love. Thus the history of my past presents sharply defined contrasts of shade and light. Hence it follows, that God is inclined to show His great mercy towards sinners, and also, that He chooses the insignificant and humble, in order to give greater and purer glory to His name by selecting poor instruments for the accomplishment of His will. To Him, then, be eternal honor, praise and glory; to me, contempt and humiliation a thousand times deserved."

2. After mentioning some faults which she committed before she was eight or nine years old, she adds, that God even then showed her His presence and love by granting, in a striking manner, her childish petitions. Then she continues:

"When I was eight or nine years old, a pious relative who had come to visit us, said to my mother in my presence, that it was about time that I and my elder sister Julia should be prepared to receive the sacrament of Penance, as we had already arrived at the years of discretion. This observation deeply impressed me, and I scarcely could await the hour when we children were put to bed. When this had been done, and I found myself alone and unobserved, I freely abandoned myself to the feelings of my heart which craved with all its might pardon for and cleansing from its faults. To attain this end I resorted to a truly childlike means. I buried my face in the pillow, drawing with my fingers the figure of a confessor, and with scalding tears I made a sincere confession of all my sins. When, after a considerable time, I had finished my confession, I felt that the pillow was wet through and through with my tears, and I feared it would be noticed next morning. But I consoled myself, and continuing in the assumed posture, again wept over my sins. Finally I must have fallen asleep. All I remember is, that on awaking next morning I felt unutterable peace and was exceedingly happy. I was glad, too, to find that the pillow had become perfectly dry."

3. After recounting her struggles against the sensual imaginations related above, she confesses

to a lively sense of weakness and wretchedness during this period. The school children at Aix la Chapelle were accustomed to go to confession every six weeks, and she probably did the same.

Then she relates a special grace, which she received even before her first Communion. "One day, after I had just been to confession, I went with a feeling of sweet peace into our garden. Scarcely had I entered, when I felt myself possessed in a sensible manner by the grace of God. A strong love for Our Divine Saviour was enkindled in my heart. I felt impelled to sink upon my knees; but as I was exposed to observation on all sides, I contented myself to remain standing and thus receive the full impression. Raising my eyes to heaven, I made answer to the Lord, Who by an interior manifestation exacted from me the promise to renounce everything sensual, and nevermore to commit a voluntary sin. At the same time I felt an interior strength to keep this promise." She adds, that she made this promise with the full consciousness of its import, and that she faithfully kept it. Immediately the interior disturbances and worry of imagination ceased. Her anxious self-torment and scrupulosity was replaced by loving confidence in her Redeemer.

4. But the combat for a heavenly crown never ceases during life. When one temptation is vanquished, another takes its place. Her quick temper was a source of continual outbursts of impatience. She relates: "Scarcely had I now, with the grace of God, begun to put the first enemy to flight, when a second one arose. I refer to the passion of anger

which often impelled me, and sometimes caused me to yield, to violent outbursts, especially towards my younger sister. Nevertheless, I always felt the impropriety of such behavior. The Lord made me feel very sensibly how offensive it was to Him, and I promised, with the help of His grace, entirely to overcome these outbursts of passion. To fulfil this promise cost me a great effort, the more so because my younger brothers found it a pastime to test my patience by innocently teasing and irritating me. Especially once I had to overcome a violent temptation of this kind, but the Lord assisted me with His grace. I overcame myself, and after this victory I felt that this passion also was weakened and henceforth I overcame it more easily."

5. After this humble self-accusation she adds a few words on the interior graces received at that time. "Beside the evil in me I experienced, as a result of God's great mercy, many and great workings of grace. For instance, scarcely had I heard during instruction at school that Our Dear Saviour had a special love for the poor, and had Himself become lowly and poor for our sake, when I felt impelled to a great love for the poor and was grieved that I did not belong to their number. I began to associate with a girl amongst us whom we considered poor, and gave her my friendship. I also felt impelled by divine grace to offer up all temporal things to God, and asked Him to take away from me all that I possessed, among other things those articles of dress that pleased me most. At that time I was not permitted to give anything away, for the strictness with which we were brought

up did not allow us to dispose of anything. The interior impulse to this renunciation, with which the Lord inspired me at that time, was so strong that my face flushed in consequence of the agitation, and for the moment I felt as if raised up from the earth. This happened at the entrance to the convent of St. Leonard, very near the place to which the dream had reference which I shall presently relate. Similar occurrences happened at several other times during my childhood. I have mentioned only these because it seems to me that Our Dear Saviour intended to prepare me by them for what He required of me, and what was to be observed later in the Congregation."

6. Shortly after her first confession she had a dream relative to her future vocation, which made an extraordinary and lasting impression on her, and which she relates in detail. Sure as it is that dreams, as a rule, are but the effects of an excited imagination, it is not to be denied that there are exceptions, that is, God sometimes seeks to convey certain communications and impressions to the soul by dreams. Many instances in Holy Scripture and in the lives of the saints do not permit a doubt regarding the divine origin of such dreams. Frances pertinently remarks, that when they are from God, their supernatural source manifests itself in their great and salutary effects.

7. "I had a peculiar dream, which I am inclined to think supernatural on account of the effect it produced in me. As well as I can remember, I was about nine years old, and a day-pupil in St. Leonard's academy. I dreamt I was with other

children in the room of the directress, when the portress came and announced that somebody wished to speak to little Frances. I was greatly astonished, for on account of our strict and secluded bringing up I had as yet never received a visit. The directress told me to follow the portress to the parlor, which I did amid great expectations. She opened the door of the room, bade me enter, and retired. I was all on the alert, and what I beheld made an impression on me which I shall never be able to describe. Before me stood the exquisite figure of a boy or youth, sublimely beautiful and gracious. The long, flowing robe, the arms folded on the breast, the parted hair flowing in long locks over the shoulders, the beautiful countenance — all this was impressed upon me in a moment, so that it seems to me it can never be effaced. And when He looked at me with inexpressible mildness, it seemed that my heart was captured. For to behold Our Divine Lord and to know and love Him, was one and the same thing. I advanced towards Him, and He extended His arms to receive me. At that moment my heart melted; I could no longer restrain myself. I was raised up by a higher power and drawn to the bosom of my Saviour. Burying my face in this sacred abode, I felt myself embraced by my Redeemer, and, His Heart speaking to mine, my soul was penetrated with an intense contrition for my sins. I wept scalding tears at having offended His divine love, wetting the sacred breast with them. Thus weeping on the Heart of my loving and beloved Jesus, I felt how love and sorrow contended in my own heart. My soul was

in a state of bitter sweetness and sweet bitterness; but strong as the sorrow was, the prevailing feeling was sweetness. All at once the solemn silence was broken by a noise similar to the rustling of dry leaves stirred by the autumn wind. I was made to understand that these leaves represented my sins, and I heard a voice saying that through the love of Jesus all my sins should be forgiven me forever.

"Thus ended this happy dream; but its impression on my soul, and the effect produced by it continued, and last to this day. It is a sort of sensible love for Our Divine Saviour that was enkindled by that dream, and by which the heart longing for love was drawn to its centre by the love of Jesus. Therefore it can never find joy or peace when it deviates in the least from it."

8. All these occurrences happened before her first Communion. They were, in a manner, a preparation for it and for her future vocation. It is evident that God intended to form in her a contrite and humble heart; for such a heart is the soil in which are produced all supernatural graces and virtues.

CHAPTER IV.

Her First Communion.—Other effects of Grace during her Childhood.—Death of her Mother.

1. At the age of ten years and nine months Frances received her first Communion. She writes as follows:

"Canon Deboeur, the good priest who had taken my sponsor's place in baptism, and who since then

had become an intimate friend of our family, had a great affection for me, of which he gave me proof on all occasions. To the children's great joy he visited us frequently. One morning in May or June, 1829, the aged clergyman came to our house very early. Looking immediately for mother, he withdrew with her to the garden. Presently mother called me, and the reverend gentleman took my hand and said: "Child, I had a very peculiar dream concerning you last night. You must be prepared as soon as possible to receive your first holy Communion." Mother remarked that I was still very young, but withal no dunce; she would therefore make no objections. Then she inquired on what day it was to take place. The clergyman answered that it must occur on no other day than the feast of St. Francis. Mother consulted the almanac and was rejoiced to find that in that year the feast of the saint coincided with that of Our Lady of Victories, which was celebrated in a solemn manner in our parish church, and, in a sense, was also my mother's (Mary Louisa Victoria) patronal feast. It was now decided that I should receive first Communion on that day together with my sister Julia Ottilia, who was about a year and a half older than I. A priest gave us the necessary instruction. The immediate preparation for Communion was well made. I yearned for the happy moment when Our Lord was to give Himself to me. I was greatly moved when I received the Blessed Sacrament. My sponsor, the aged canon, gave it to us and to our whole family, who all approached the holy table at the

same time. When he ministered the sacred host to me his tears flowed copiously, and he was so moved that his voice almost failed him. I was moved to tears also, but I do not remember whether it was solely because Our Dear Saviour came to me, or whether it was not also because I saw the good old priest weep. I was very recollected and filled with spiritual joy; but the day did not pass without some interior distractions caused mostly by outward circumstances. This saddened me the more because I had not expected it.

2. "About a year after my first Communion I had the privilege of receiving the holy sacrament of Confirmation. I remember that I was very devout and greatly moved. When the Most Reverend Archbishop anointed my forehead and struck my cheek it seemed to me that I became inflamed with an internal fire. I remained in this mood all day, and henceforth I felt an earnest desire to devote myself entirely to Our Divine Redeemer."

3. Frances, fortified by the holy sacraments, fixed her heart firmly on God, the ultimate and highest object of all spirits. The natural and supernatural gifts of God were developed more and more in her soul, for "the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day." (Prov. IV. 18.) She writes of her spiritual condition at that time: "After overcoming the passion of anger, I became, it seems to me, a rather pious child. I began to love the Lord with all my heart, and all my thoughts went out to Him. If I strayed from Him in the least, my conscience reproved me severely."

4. Her whole character and interior guidance made it impossible for her to be content with an average piety, such as Christians are usually satisfied with. Nature and grace impelled her to the attainment of the highest. This spirit directed to higher things had manifested itself even earlier, when she first went to school, and on a very remarkable occasion, which demonstrates on the one hand the child's still immature judgment, and on the other her lofty and resolute mind. Like St. Teresa and other child-saints, she wished to become a martyr, and for a peculiar motive and in a singularly misguided manner. She writes: "On a certain occasion — I believe it was before the above mentioned dream, but do not know for certain — I had heard that by martyrdom we might atone for all our sins and become perfectly pure before God. Erroneously I imagined that for this purpose a person was permitted to cause his own death, if it were only done for the love of God. And with this intention I resolved to drown myself. I confided this plan to my brother.*) His instruction taught me better, but I greatly regretted that I had not executed my plan before his explanation; for I thought that if I had acted in good faith, God would have accepted the sacrifice of my life in reparation for my sins."

5. It cannot surprise us that with this excessive, and, as yet, undefined power of the spirit working in her, she should have experienced from her early years a desire to consecrate herself to

*) She refers to her brother Charles, three years her senior, in whom she had great confidence.

God in the religious state; which feeling became, in her eleventh or twelfth year, an almost morbid longing to enter a strict Order of penance, namely, that of the Trappistines. But knowing that her parents had different plans concerning her, and that they did not even suspect what passed in their child's heart, she did not see a way out of her painful position and to the attainment of her object. She relates: "My sole confidant was the pious seamstress mentioned before. In a measure, I confided also in my younger brother, who likewise had a preference for the Order of Trappists; but in his inexperience he thought to enter it only in later years, after he had fulfilled his duties in the world. He subsequently became a good priest; the Lord be praised for it!

"One evening, when my parents had gone out for a visit, and we children were left to the care of a servant, I influenced this my brother to accompany me secretly to a pious priest, whom I wished to consult how I might accomplish my great desire of consecrating myself to God in religion. This venturing out was a very daring undertaking, for our bringing up was very strict, and we were not allowed to go anywhere without permission and without the attendance of our parents or someone in whom they confided. My ardent desire gave me courage, and my brother consented without knowing at first what I really was about. I told him only when we were on the street. Praying in silence, and hurrying on through the dark streets, we arrived unmolested at the clergyman's house. Luckily, neither our brothers and sisters nor the

servants noticed our absence, wherein I recognized a manifest assistance of God.

"I stated to the priest my consuming desire of entering the strict Order of Trappistines, acquainted him with my plan of secretly leaving home to enter a convent, and besought him most urgently to assist me. He disapproved of my plan, and dissuaded me most earnestly from entering that austere Order. He recommended me rather to become a Sister of Charity. But I held fast to my plan of leading a life of penance. At that time, external mortifications had a great attraction for me, and I devoted myself to them as far as I could."

Some time later she selected this priest for her confessor, and though as such he continued to counsel her to give up the thought of that Order of penance, she neither would nor could abandon the resolution so dear to her.

6. "Meanwhile, the above-mentioned pious seamstress counseled me to consult, in this affair of my soul, another very pious and renowned clergyman, her parish priest. As I was not permitted to go out, she undertook to acquaint him with my design, and also asked him for a suitable pious book for me. For, except the "Imitation of Christ," and a few prayer-books, there were no works of the kind in our house. He sent me an old edition of the lives of the first Sisters of the Visitation. My joy at receiving the book was so great, that during the whole of that day I could neither eat not drink, whereat I was greatly embarrassed. I rejoiced exceedingly to learn from this book the wonderful ways by which God leads

souls. My desire of loving God alone was increased, and I resolved to sacrifice everything to Him. Only one thought discouraged me, namely, that everything which I could give to the Lord seemed so mean and insignificant."

7. To the interior trials which Frances had experienced for some time, there was now added another which sorely grieved the devoted child's tender heart, namely, the long illnes and finally the death of her beloved mother. She knew, that because this earth is no longer a paradise of unalloyed bliss, all men must learn to know sorrow, and that happiness must be looked for only in hearts where dwells God, the unchangeable object of eternal love. Let us listen to her own recital.

"I continued in these dispositions till my thirteenth year. Then Our Lord demanded of me a great sacrifice. My mother, whom I dearly loved, became dangerougly ill, so that we feared for her life. She was sick for three years, being confined to her bed almost continually during the last six months of her life. I was with her often. She had always shown a preference for me, but not to the prejudice of her other children. I think my lively disposition pleased her. Besides, she had become accustomed to my services as interpreter when she was obliged to converse in German. Thus I had been drawn closer to her than the others. It was now very hard for me to see her approaching death. It seemed as if I should have to die with her. But when the Lord demanded of me the sacrifice, he also gave me grace to offer it with full resignation. My mother's death was

very pious and edifying. Before it occurred, I felt impelled to implore Our Lord most fervently to spare her to us for some time yet. I offered myself in sacrifice to Him for this intention. At the same time I felt the insufficiency of this sacrifice and perceived, that by it I could not present a gift to God, because I belonged to Him already. Therefore I was content to protest before the Lord that He knew my mind: if He was pleased with my sacrifice, He would deign to accept it.

8. "Our Lord called mother's dear soul to Himself just as I was thirteen years old, on the 22d of February, 1832. I omit giving a detailed account of this loss, so grievous to all our family. The memory of the dear departed one is withal consoling, because, thanks be to God! I can truly say that mother was very virtuous. When the Lord demanded this great sacrifice, and gave me grace and strength for it, I knelt and offered my dear mother with my whole will and with all my heart to God. The sacrifice did indeed cost countless tears, but nevertheless it was sweet, because it was offered to the Lord.

"I now conceived the thought of asking the Blessed Virgin Mary to be my mother, and kneeling, did so with all my heart. Henceforth I daily said a little prayer composed for this purpose, in which I implored the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, asking her to take me and our whole household under her maternal protection. The dear Mother of God assisted me henceforth most maternally, but to my great confusion I must confess that later, when I had been three years in the convent, I omitted this daily prayer."

9. The loss of her mother was a great sacrifice for Frances. But God's grace and man's sacrifices correspond. We must sacrifice the lesser, if we would rise up to the greater, to God. "Forsake everything," says Thomas a Kempis, "and thou shalt find all." How can the heart of man gain heaven, if it does not cut loose from the transitory things of this world? How can it be raised up to God, and be, in a manner, changed into Him, unless it cease to belong to self? O happy sacrifice, that exchanges for the phantoms of temporal life the possession of an infinite good! This the great Apostle felt when he said: "I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord." (Philip III. 8.)

CHAPTER V.

Her interior and exterior life during the first years after her mother's death.

1. The consuming desire mentioned above of serving God in a penitential religious Order continued despite the counsels of her confessor, and did not permit her soul to come to rest. "Thus I contended for a long time," she writes, "until at last I succeeded in going out and visiting the priest that had sent me the above-mentioned book. Until then I had not been acquainted with him, but confidently expected that he would give me good counsel. I candidly manifested my conscience to him. He asked me some questions, regarded me intently and then said decisively, that for the time

being I should sacrifice to God my desire of serving Him in the Order of Trappistines, and obey the directions of my confessor, who deemed me called to active life. Later, God would show me what to do; if it was His holy will that I should join that rigorous Order, there was still time to do so.

2. "This decision calmed me. Arrived at home, I meditated on the priest's counsel, in which I had desired to recognize the will of God, and it appeared to me that God willed me to renounce, at least for a time, my plan of becoming a Trappistine. I fell on my knees before a crucifix, and amid a stream of tears, began to offer up this sacrifice to God. I offered and desired to offer it absolutely, even should my heart, in which this idea had taken so deep a root, bleed to death. Whilst I thus knelt and turned my tearful eyes to Our Dear Lord on the cross, contemplating Him crowned with thorns and wounded by my sins, and protesting that I would gladly heal these wounds by penance, a clear light suddenly penetrated my soul. It seemed to me as if I received from the cross an interior manifestation that God had accepted the sacrifice of my will, that I should turn to something else, and devote myself to active pursuits of charity. Filled with joy and sincere gratitude towards my Divine Saviour, I rose from my knees. All hesitation had vanished; a fire of holy charity was enkindled in my soul, and from that moment I felt an ardent desire to serve and love Our Lord in the poor, the sick and the miserable. In that solemn moment, moved by divine grace, I offered myself to God for the service of suffering mankind."

3. Within eighteen months after her mother's death, Frances was called upon to mourn also the decease of her two elder sisters: the senior, Mary, died on the 17th of June, 1833, and Julia Ottilia on the 12th of July, the same year. Thus it happened, that in deference to her father's wish, she had to place herself, at the early age of fourteen, at the head of a rather large household. She relates her trials in this position as follows:

"In consequence of these deaths so quickly succeeding each other, the Lord required great sacrifices of me and of the whole family. Between one death and the other, there was no time for the wounded heart to heal. But blessed be the name of the Lord! I acknowledge that it was neccessary for me to be visited by trials and to be overwhelmed with cares. By this means Our Lord permitted me to attain a certain independence and maturity of judgment which would have been impossible to my thoughtlessness without these sad and trying occurrences. Thus does the Lord know how to lead, ordaining all things for the best, and for the attainment of His adorable designs."

4. Although Frances, having lived hitherto entirely dependent upon the will of others, seemed scarcely fitted, on account of her tender age, to preside over a large household with many servants, she succeeded unexpectedly well, and to the full satisfaction of her father. That the servants had an extraordinary respect for their youthful mistress is confirmed by the testimony of others. She herself writes, that her father soon placed full confidence in her, and often spoke approvingly of her

manner of conducting affairs. "In my household duties I always implored the aid of the Blessed Virgin, especially for the direction and care of the servants, which was a rather serious and difficult task for my youthful age. At first I had to have frequent recourse to prayer and to overcome myself resolutely in giving commands. Often I would rather have performed the work myself; or, when obliged to correct some one, I would have preferred to ignore the fault; but my conscience insisted that I should fulfil my duty and preserve order. Meanwhile, my younger sister, Paulina, was sent to Belgium, where she remained at school a year and a half."

5. Despite these distracting cares and duties, her interior life did not decline, nor did she omit her exercises of piety. The greater liberty of her position, which naturally resulted from her present office, made it possible for her to overcome by degrees, and not without some manoeuvering on her part, the restrictions which her father's will had placed on her regarding the frequentation of church, assisting at Mass and receiving the sacraments. She writes:

"Everything appeared easy to me, except the very restricted permission of receiving holy Communion. As children, we were permitted to receive holy Communion but once a month. Often we had to wait longer, especially during the Easter season; for our father judged that for us to receive it oftener during that time than once in seven weeks, was to impose too great a burden on the priests, and it would cause others to remain away from confession."

6. Mr. Schervier had another reason for not wishing his daughter to attend church too often. He feared, and her sponsor, the good, old canon seems to have been of the same opinion, that Frances might become, as he expressed it, "too pious," and would desire to enter a convent. This latter would have interfered with the plan which the two gentlemen had formed regarding her. The canon intended to make his favorite heir to his property, and wished her to take care of him in his declining years.

These plans, formed by human prudence, did not coincide with the designs of God, and transgressed the limits of parental authority. The latter may insist that children fulfil their duties towards God, and that they beware of false piety; but they may not determine the degree of piety to be attained, nor coerce a child in the choice of a state of life. God alone orders the inner life of a soul in conjunction with her own free will.

7. Frances is therefore not to be censured for not feeling herself obliged to be always of her father's opinion concerning her devotions. She rather believed it to be her right to follow her interior impulse as long as she avoided everything that might give her father just cause of offense. At first she visited the church secretly, but always attended by some one; later, she succeeded in gaining her father's consent, or at least his silent toleration of her devout practices.

8. Her greatest trial was to be deprived of holy Communion so long. She writes: "O how I yearned for holy Communion! Sometimes I suc-

ceeded in stealing away of a morning, after I had, with considerable difficulty, remained fasting at breakfast without being observed." But with all her caution she could not prevent her father from sometimes noticing her visits to the church, and from severely chiding her therefor.

9. This, in itself praiseworthy desire of holy Communion and of more frequent visits to the church, was rendered more ardent by the obstacles placed in her way, and had, withal, its share of human frailty. She relates: "At that time, when I was not permitted to go out on week-days, I was several times greatly dejected and somewhat discouraged. I accused myself of it in confession. My confessor, who knew the circumstances of our household quite well, exhorted me to persevere quietly, and above all to exercise myself in the fulfilment of the will of God Who, for the present, demanded of me this sacrifice of renunciation. He added seriously, that everthing else would avail me nothing, if I were not earnestly intent on conforming my will entirely to the will of God. These words penetrated my soul like lightning. I firmly resolved to submit in this as in everything else to the will of God, and seriously took pains to reduce my resolution to practice. My aforesaid desire was not lessened thereby, but it became more calm and reasonable. This practice of submission to the will of God greatly profited my soul. Henceforth I was in a better disposition of mind, was cheerful and happy, and intent on walking in the presence of God. Untoward occurrences that will happen in every household, disturbed me

but little, or not at all. Regarding God in everything, I was able to bear them in peace, and even in cheerful resignation."

After a few years, her father allowed her to go to church every day, first attended by someone, then alone. Now she was also enabled to receive holy Communion oftener, as her confessor not only gave her this permission, but even allowed her, in consideration of her limited time, to receive in certain cases without confession, and at unusual times.

10. Her confessor's correction of her impulsive desire for the sacraments was just. There is no means for the attainment of perfection so holy, that self-will may not deprave it, no exercise of piety so sacred, that it may not be abused and converted into food for vain glory. Thomas a Kempis says truly: "A man's true progress consists in denying himself." And: "Greater grace shall always be added to thee, when thou hast perfectly given up thyself, without resuming thyself again. Therefore, leave thyself, and thou shalt find me. Stand without choice, or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain."

CHAPTER VI.

Beginning of her charitable work for the Poor.

1. The more Frances grew in the interior life of faith, the stronger became her impulse to active charity. Her devotion to the poor and sick developed itself in three degrees: first, by her almost unbounded liberality in giving alms; then, by

unremitting personal labor; and finally, by consecrating her own person and her whole life to God in the service of the poor and sick in the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis.

2. Let us hear from herself how she began her charitable work, and how her heart, which was naturally inclined to partake in the sufferings and joys of others, and towards active work for them, was elevated by supernatural grace to a higher love originating in the spirit of Christ. She writes:

"I discerned my Divine Redeemer in the poor and sick as manifestly, as if I had seen Him with my very eyes; therefore I was solely and entirely intent on how I might serve and love Him. Before the care of the household had devolved entirely on me, (I refer to the time before my sisters' death), I rarely had the opportunity of yielding to this desire of my heart. But sometimes I succeeded in finding means to satisfy these cravings of charity. Through certain small savings I purchased some cotton yarn, and began secretly, that is, mornings in bed, to knit stockings for the poor. They were the first I finished alone, without the help of my dear elder sister. The sight of my crucified Redeemer, despoiled of everything, had so captivated my heart, that I experienced a great longing to furnish Him, in His poor, with the necessary covering. I did this in a childlike, confiding spirit of faith, and experienced great spiritual delight. In the same manner, when I gave food and drink to Our Lord in the person of His poor, I always felt an increase of sensible love for Him, and was thereby amply repaid for the little privations which

I had undergone for the purpose. O how sweet and pure this charity was to me!"

3. After the death of her mother and sisters, the barriers which had hitherto confined her ardent desire of helping the poor, were in a degree removed. Being at the head of the household, she was permitted to give alms in accordance with the circumstances of her wealthy family. It was not to be expected of her charitable heart that she should regulate herself in this by economical principles. Domestic stores, articles of clothing and bedding that in the least degree seemed superfluous, went to the poor. The faithful old nurse often murmured and gave vent to her disapproval: "The child will by and by give away everything!" And she contrived to hide whatever she thought was not secure with Frances. But she made no complaint to Mr. Schervier, who, if he had known all, would scarcely have acquiesced in the doings of his daughter. She was so cautious, that he never noticed her charitable excesses, but was quite satisfied with her manner of directing the household affairs.

4. She was furnished with abundant means from another source, which confirmed her in the idea that she was authorized to be thus liberal towards the poor. In his last years, canon Deboeur made his home in her parents' house. It was his custom, twice a year, to make valuable presents to his godchild. He intended to provide her in the course of time with a complete outfit and with silver plate for her future establishment. In the purchase of these things he consulted her mother, so as to make a good selection. These presents were a source of

great trouble to Frances; very soon she felt the fetters imposed upon her by the regard due to the affection and intentions of her liberal sponsor, which she considered as great obstacles to her resolution of consecrating herself entirely to God. "I often wept," she writes, "at my lot of having so good and wealthy a sponsor, and would gladly have resigned this privilege, as it was called, to someone else. My mother, during the last years of her life, was no longer able, on account of her illness, to superintend the purchase of these things. Therefore the good old priest gave her a large sum of money to be expended for the purpose. It was kept separately for me. Moreover, I knew that my sponsor had entrusted my parents with 10,000 thalers for me; and therefore I thought myself entitled to assist the poor to my heart's content. For I steadily held on to my purpose of joining some religious Order, and of accepting nothing beyond the dowry requisite for this purpose. I was quite sure of being right, and my conscience was easy, so that I encroached considerably on the provisions under my care, and on the linen and plate purchased for me. The above-mentioned seamstress had to sell the latter for me, and through her hands the proceeds went to the poor."

5. She well knew that if her father had been aware of her liberality, he would not have approved of it; also, that he would not consent to her retiring to a convent. Under existing circumstances she could acquaint him with neither.—As a rule, these proceedings of hers can not be recommended to others for imitation; on the other hand, they must

not be judged in the usual way, and by a human standard, because her position was a peculiar one, and the divine impulse of charity guided her. The lives of the saints are full of such traits of charity and liberality towards the poor, which, though they seem imprudent and excessive to the worldly-minded, are not without merit before God.

6. On her part, she exercised great prudence, and had recourse to frequent and fervent prayer that her charitable deeds might not become a source of vexation or anger to anyone. And in this she was quite successful. She writes: "It seems incomprehensible to me to this day, how my doings could remain undiscovered, so that, as far as I can remember, no trouble arose therefrom. On the contrary, I enjoyed the full confidence of my father, who was very cautious in other things. The servants also respected me. True, I implored the aid of the Blessed Virgin continually."

7. But the ardent charity of this soul so ready for sacrifices was not satisfied with this first method, that is, with demonstrating her love for the poor by lavish gifts; her desire, or as she calls it, the necessity, of visiting the poor and sick continued to grow more and more intense. "This yearning was so strong, that sometimes I became quite feverish, and in the evening would run through our garden as if beside myself to be relieved and to draw breath. At the same time my tears would flow copiously, and I implored the Blessed Virgin to aid me to attain my desire. I even went so far as to beseech this good Mother, in a silly and presumptuous manner, to take my place in the

house for some hours, that I might be enabled to go to the huts of the poor and to the hospitals; for I had read in the lives of the saints that the Mother of mercy had formerly sometimes done this. I prayed and yearned for this favor a long time and almost certainly expected some day to see the Blessed Virgin in my figure in the house, and then to have the happiness of satisfying my inexpressibly strong yearning for the service of the poor and sick, which was like a tormenting thirst.

8. "Sometimes, but very rarely, father went abroad for some days. Then I yielded to this interior impulse. I was allowed to visit a hospital, and had also become acquainted with some poor sick persons in the city. How I rejoiced at these visits! I believed that I saw Our Divine Redeemer Himself in my patients, and was happy to serve and nurse them. Nevertheless, I was obliged to be very cautious during these visits, or my domestics would have informed my father against me, and he would have forbidden their continuance. Moreover, I was under the control of my married stepsister, who usually came every afternoon to our house with her little children, and was by no means of the same mind with me."

9. The above-mentioned hospital was the infirmary of St. Joseph, which had been in a very neglected condition before it was given in charge of the Borromean Sisters; but they had put it in order and quite transformed it years before. The Superioress, Mother Josephine, had great confidence in Frances, and was very kind to her. Here she had her first experience and instruction in

ministering to the sick. She even asked for admission to this community, to take effect when she was free to dispose of herself. This was about the year 1843.

10. She relates a peculiar occurrence concerning her spiritual life about this time, which she ascribes directly to demoniac influence. She writes: "One day, when I had just returned from church and was in my room to change my dress, I suddenly lost my sight. As I felt well in every other way, and never had experienced any trouble with my eyes, this blindness was a great surprise to me. Nevertheless, I remained quiet, and the affliction soon passed away. Presently, however, I felt my soul filled with an indescribable sadness, such as I had never before experienced. With a deep sigh, I sat on a chair. In a moment, I was seized with a boisterous cheerfulness, or rather a fit of laughter, so that I could not suppress an exclamation. Then I seemed to hear a voice saying to me, that I had now become demented, and would likely be compelled to blaspheme and curse God in that state. An inexpressible horror seized me. I was scarcely able to breathe, and felt as if standing on the brink of a deep abyss. It was like a battle between two conflicting powers. I thought I would become demented the next moment. Should I willingly submit? To me there was nothing so terrible in the world as insanity. Whenever the thought of it had come to me, I had always turned away from it shuddering. But now I had to resolve to be resigned to such a state; for it seemed to me to be the will of God. The interior combat was fierce,

but divine grace assisted me; Our Dear Lord did not abandon me. I arose quickly, fell on my knees before the crucifix, and called upon Our Lord: "If it be Thy will that I become demented, let it be accomplished in me. But for this one thing I implore Thee: permit not that I blaspheme and curse Thee whilst I am in that state." Scarcely had I prayed thus, when this deplorable state of mind ceased. A deep tranquility of soul replaced it. I was able to resume my duties quietly and cheerfully, and, as it seemed to me, with greater recollection. I had had similar experiences before, but the attacks had not been so fierce, and had not demanded self-renunciation in such a high degree. After this severe struggle, and the victory which the Lord gave me, similar attacks never returned in my later life, except once, when in a severe illness, the evil spirit caused me to suffer severely." Of this later.

11. After yearning and hoping, praying and struggling so long, it was to be expected that finally the hand of God would open to her the closed portal and lead her into a wide field of personal charitable ministrations. And thus it did come to pass; not indeed, in the above-mentioned strange, wonderful manner desired by her excessive yearning, but in the usual course of divine Providence, combining and permitting natural causes to work together to serve the high plans of divine wisdom, and to produce the desired effects.

What Frances herself had deemed less probable than a miraculous intervention of the Blessed Virgin; what her father, and others with him,

had hitherto regarded as impossible, became a reality: her father himself, without being asked, opened the closed portal, and gave her permission to visit the poor and sick.

12. Truly, man proposes — in his narrow conceits, and God disposes — in His inscrutable ways the destinies of His elect. To speak with Isaias: "My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts." (Isai. LV. 8, 9.) "Submit thyself to him, and thereby thou shalt have the best fruits." (Job XXII. 21.)

CHAPTER VII.

Frances joins a Charitable Society.

1. In 1837, the Prussian government imprisoned the Archbishop of Cologne, Clement August von Droste-Vischering, for strenuously defending the rights of the Church. This act of violence aroused the hitherto slumbering Catholics of Germany. A revival of religious fervor resulted, especially in Westphalia and the Rhine country. Aix la Chapelle also experienced an awakening. Able and zealous clergymen fostered the new spirit. The female sex was especially conspicuous for fervor in prayer and frequentation of the sacraments. Young ladies of the higher classes began to consecrate themselves to God in the religious state, and entered convents abroad, because in Prussia but few establishments of the kind had survived the

general storm against religion, and these few were kept under strict governmental surveillance. Others, touched by the great temporal and spiritual destitution of the lower classes, devoted themselves to the relief of their misery. About the year 1840, a number of young ladies of the best families founded a society for the succor and nursing of the poor and sick in their homes. Others again, collected the children of the poor, opened a school for them, and instructed them themselves.

2. Frances relates: "When I heard of the society for ministering to the sick in their homes, and for the relief of the poor, I was delighted, and with all my heart congratulated those that were privileged to be members, not thinking in the least that the same privilege would soon be granted to me also. But God so disposed, that the pious ladies who had started the society appealed to my father to permit me to join it. The two ladies (one of them was Miss Anna von Lommessen, who later entered a convent of the Sacred Heart), managed the affair so prudently as to impress my father favorably with the society, and they persuaded him to give his consent, of the consequences of which he did not then think. In this I always saw, honored and loved a special providence of God. After the young ladies had taken their departure, father called me and informed me of the affair. A relative, visiting us, loudly protested against the permission I had received and tried very hard to make him revoke it. But he declared with his accustomed firmness, that having permitted me to join the society if I wished, the matter was settled. He also gave me

leave to attend the first meeting, which was held in Miss von Lommessen's house. There the care of the sick and poor in St. Paul's parish, to which we belonged, was assigned to me.

3. Now, when I informed my father of my future obligations as member of the society, especially that I was to visit the sick and the poor, and relieve them with the funds of the society, he was displeased, and forbade me to go out, giving as a reason, that by such visits I would bring sickness into the house. It would be sufficient, he said, if I attended the meetings, which, in their turn, might also be held at our house, and that I kept a record of the district assigned to me. Instead of visiting the sick myself, I should send the often mentioned old seamstress. In order to gain my point, I thought it best not to keep silence now. In a respectful, but convincing manner, I urged my objections against his views, and soon he had to yield."

She then relates how she accustomed her father to her going out, first attended by the seamstress, and later alone, but not without hearing from time to time objections and reproofs from him. But soon he relented. "Once," she continues, "he said to an acquaintance that his daughter had succeeded in emancipating herself. When I smiled at these words, and gave a pleasant answer, he also smiled, and henceforth matters were all right between us.

4. "When my confessor, who well knew the circumstances, learned what liberty I enjoyed now, he wonderingly exclaimed: "God has secretly performed a miracle! Now you have attained your

object, you will no longer wish to join the Sisters of Charity. For your desire will be satisfied better by what you have achieved now, than by entering the Order." The good priest spoke, so to say, prophetically, although I did not quite understand him. But I felt convinced that what had been in my mind for years, and for which I had yearned day and night, should now be accomplished, small as the beginning was. My joy, and my gratitude to God were indescribable.

5. "Meanwhile, my sister Pauline returned from school. I gradually initiated her in the duties of the household; and as she was apt and willing, she soon assumed its entire care and left me free to devote myself to my heart's content to my new task. For several years I abandoned myself to the various works of charity with all my soul. I now understand that at that time I was wanting in one essential particular, that is, in spiritual direction, of the benefits of which I then had no knowledge. Perhaps God permitted it thus in order to leave me free to act; for a director would have been compelled on reflection, and according to the dictates of prudence, to prohibit many things to which my ardor impelled me. Twice or three times, in very serious affairs, I consulted a prudent man and acted on his advice; but thereafter I again went my own way in great liberty and independence. As my pious and excellent confessor had died, I selected an elderly, very positive clergyman, to whom I simply confessed my sins every week, without entering into other details."

6. To supplement this her own statement, by

which her extraordinary ardor of charity is scarcely indicated, we have recourse to the account of two reliable witnesses. It was written after the death of the servant of God by two religious, associates of Frances in the charitable society before their entrance into the convent. Anna von Lommessen wrote her reminiscenses on the 7th of April, 1887, in Bois-l'-Eveque near Liege, as a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart; Magdalen Hermans wrote hers on the 6th of April, 1887, as Superioress of a convent of the Congregation of the Divine Infant, in Southam, England. Both had been co-workers of Frances; in St. Paul's parish the latter had been her assistant.

7. Both agree in describing Frances as the one member of the society surpassing all the rest. Remarkable for deep religious principles and a corresponding virtuous life, she was endowed with a solid, practical judgment, despite her high ideals. When she spoke, everyone was convinced that the affair in question had been wisely considered and the means for its accomplishment carefully selected. Her calm, resolute manner, her discretion, reticence and caution inspired all with great confidence. Her whole life was guided by a vivid faith; all her thoughts and actions centered in God. She constantly and ardently desired to glorify Him, to seek and win souls for Him. In the service of the sick she feared no contagion, was not deterred by the most abject ministrations, did not shrink from night watches, and bore the most provoking ingratitude and rudeness of the sick with admirable patience and fortitude. She was very clever at

bandaging wounds, cleansed the repulsive dwellings of the poor, made their neglected children presentable, washed and mended their rags, or presented them with better clothing, and secretly carried wood, coal and provisions to them. These lowly and laborious ministrations were her daily task. Penetrated with a lively faith, she often said: "We are handmaids of the Lord, Who is present in His poor." If she had the opportunity of performing some more than ordinarily disagreeable task, her delight and gratitude to God were boundless, and with a face radiant with joy she would say: "How good of Our Dear Lord to deem us worthy to serve Him thus!"

8. The better she became acquainted by personal experience with the destitution and misery of the poor and sick, the more her pity aroused her to activity in finding means and methods of help. For the purpose of providing proper nourishment for the sick and convalescent she organized a society; she herself went the rounds to the families in better circumstances and begged that on stated days they would give meals or pecuniary assistance to the sick; for special cases of destitution she would organize subscriptions, and collect them herself. When calling on her benefactors she would speak so movingly, that most of them gladly complied with her requests. How happy she would be lugging home great packs of articles begged for the poor! She helped many a family by obtaining work for the members, and by assisting them with her counsel as to the manner in which they should order their family life, their business, and their household.

9. Still more than the temporal wants the spiritual destitution of so many went to her heart. She prayed not only for the conversion of sinners, but she prayed with them when sickness and destitution brought them under her care. She prepared them for the reception of the sacraments and assisted them in their agony. Such of them as did not understand high-German she assisted to pray in their native, low-German dialect. If death seemed hard to the poor on account of their children, she would promise to take care of them, and always did so as far as it was in her power. She also took charge of the funeral, and had the dead buried in a Christian manner.

10. Her father's factory also offered her an opportunity of exercising her zeal for souls. She provided work in it for many a poor man, at the same time exerting a wholesome influence on the religious and moral life, especially of the younger portion of the employes. She reorganized her father's school, and succeeded, not without some difficulty, to have religious instruction given there an hour every day. If she met a child on the street during school hours, she would accost him: "Child, why are you on the street? Do you not go to school? Come, bring me to your parents, and then you shall go to school with me." But a thorough bathing and combing would usually have to precede the introduction to school.

11. Even at that time she felt a particular solicitude for the conversion of fallen women, a charity to which she inclined throughout her whole life. The thought of founding a refuge for these

unfortunates was present to her even then; but meanwhile she had to content herself to serve the penitents whom the zealous priest Nellessen had collected and placed in a home. These she visited several times a week, to instruct, console and encourage them. Not content with this, she sought out stray sheep, to bring them back from the path of perdition. To save imperiled innocence, her courage even penetrated into houses of ill fame and triumphed over the insolence of hardened sinners, who often recoiled in reverence at the presence of Miss Frances, bowing to her inflexible will. In such cases her dauntless spirit, prudence, moderation and tact served her admirably.

12. Miss von Lommessen sums up her impressions of Frances during those years as follows: "Her self-denial and self-command were apparent always and in everything. Mild and charitable towards all, she was always united with God, demonstrating by her admirable promptness and composure, and unvarying evenness of temper, that she was not impelled by imagination and overwrought ideas, but that immovable faith was the foundation and root of her interior and exterior life. Everything in her gave one the impression of truth, justice, disinterested love and all-pervading charity. She stood ever under the cross of adversity, of bitter trials and sufferings. These she bore with patience and resignation, deeply feeling them, but sustained by the contemplation of her crucified Redeemer. The holy will of God was her consolation, her protection, and the mysterious power by which she was exalted above the changing scenes

of life. Her great characteristic was her ardent love of poverty in things little and great, which grew with her from childhood, and developed into a charity most boundless and self-sacrificing, whereof she gave countless proofs in later years."

13. From Sister Magdalen's account we gather another remarkable characteristic, one which caused her to be called "Mother" Frances by all her acquaintances. "With all her firmness, energy and resoluteness, was joined a tenderness and delicacy of mind that made it exceedingly difficult to her to refuse anything. When it sometimes became necessary to discontinue the furnishing of meals to a recovered patient in order to provide for someone more needy, it was a sore trial for her to inform him of it. Then she would usually send me, her assistant, to fulfil the disagreeable duty."

14. When the Great King calls a soul to a high position of external ministry or interior perfection in His kingdom, he adds to the natural endowments the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the apostles were commanded to wait till they should "be endued with power from on high." (Luke XXIV. 49.) The sending of the Holy Ghost occurred amid wonderful external manifestations on Pentecost, and wonderful did this "power from on high" prove itself in the messengers of God, in their works, their struggles, their sufferings and death. Undeniably, though not visibly and in the same measure, this power of God manifests itself in Frances. She herself mentions an interior impulse consuming and impelling her almost irresistibly to devote herself to the service of the

poor and sick. Her whole long life, with its chain of sacrifices, proves that not a passing notion or natural inclination had enkindled and kept alive in her this fire, but the Spirit of God, Who infuses that love into our hearts, which "carries a burden without being burdened, and makes all that which is bitter sweet and savory." (Imit. Chr., III. 5, 3.) All our misery comes from the want of love. Therefore we should confess and pray with Thomas a Kempis: "Because I am as yet weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by thee. For this reason, visit me often, and instruct me in Thy holy discipline." (Ib. II.)

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rev. Joseph Istas, Curate of St. Paul's Church. St. John's Charity Kitchen.

1. In 1841, Frances had the happiness, or as she expressed it, the grace of entering into closer relations with a saintly priest, the Rev. Joseph Istas, curate of St. Paul's church. In him she found a spirit of love of God and man similar to her own, and her ideal of a Catholic priest. Although she regarded and venerated the representative of the Redeemer, or rather the Redeemer Himself, in every bearer of the priestly character without reference to personal traits, yet her loving reverence and reverent love of the priesthood increased when this supernatural dignity approached her, like a gem set in gold, in the resplendent garb of extra-

ordinary virtue. To her eye of faith the priest then was, to use her own expression, "the angel of God in the flesh." When, therefore, she became aware that the same spirit of self-sacrificing charity for the poor which filled her own heart, animated this priest, and impelled him to tireless, unselfish devotion to their welfare, she rejoiced at having found in him a noble example and perfect master, to emulate whom she must strive with all her might. Nevertheless, it is undecided which of them reaped the greater benefit from this sacred relationship, founded in God alone, and from this holy emulation in works of charity. The influence and incitement was mutual; and if the priest excelled in prudence and circumspection, Frances was conspicuous for her ardor and spirit of sacrifice.

2. All witnesses agree in the praise of this excellent priest, and testify that young and old, clergy and laity revered and loved him. During the severe winter of 1841, when the poor suffered greatly, he preached, on Septuagesima Sunday, an eloquent sermon in St. Paul's church, portraying in vivid colors the needs of the destitute, and strenuously inculcating the duty of those in better circumstances to assist them. The plan that he advocated was to furnish them with healthful food during the time of scarcity. This sermon impressed his hearers so favorably that an organization was effected. Voluntary contributions came in, and by means of them he founded, in an old Dominican convent, the property of the city, what he named a "St. John's Kitchen," thus called in honor of the beloved Disciple. Here during winter, besides the

helpless poor, all honest families in want might receive their dinner gratuitously for a time. As might be expected, this good work was criticised by some, and its founder was accused of sinister motives. But he only redoubled his exertions, and visited the more prosperous families himself, whilst a number of pious young ladies called on the laborers and tradesmen to collect means.

3. Frances was foremost in this undertaking. For some time past, she had, on her own account, enlisted the sympathy of friends who assisted her in providing food for a number of destitute families. Now she was placed at the head of the collections, and directed the preparation and distribution of the victuals. But the good priest, who knew her kindness of heart, would often think himself called upon to place restrictions on her bounty. She relates: "At the distribution he would strictly watch me. When I deemed it necessary to give a meal to this or that family, and could not make him agree, I would hurridly beg some money and pay for it. Then he would yield, saying, he acted from principle."

4. On her collecting tours, Frances knew no human respect. If she but received a donation for her poor, derision and insult were a welcome addition, which she accepted pleasantly and smilingly. On market days she made the rounds of the stalls, begging remnants for her kitchen. Though her pleasant and affable address generally won the hearts, rude insults and derisive remarks would sometimes not be wanting. She often went a great distance to get what had been promised her.

5. When Archduke John of Austria visited Cologne to assist at the corner-stone-laying of the continuation of the Cathedral, she wrote him a letter to interest him in her charities, prefacing her petition by the remark that she was a godchild of the deceased emperor Francis. She sent the letter by special messenger to her friend, Sister Magdalen, of the Congregation of the Divine Infant at Cologne, asking her to have it delivered. Soon the chief magistrate of Aix la Chapelle received fifty thalers for Miss Schervier, and when he proposed to her to use part of the sum for some other purpose, she defended the rights of her poor so vigorously, that the entire sum was placed at her disposal.

6. Magnanimity, and disregard for the vain prejudices of the world, is true liberty. This fruit of a living faith is unknown to the majority of the great men of our day. They have a cowardly fear of ridicule, and fleeing from it, they rather trample reason and their own highest interests under foot, than to break asunder the fetters of human respect and of a false sense of honor. Frances, valuing human praise at its true worth, did not fear ridicule. Out of many, we select a few instances.

7. Her relatives and friends, to whom she sometimes applied for aid for the poor, knew her, and would sometimes jestingly put her to a test. On one of her begging tours she came to one of her relatives, for whom she entertained a high respect. To her request for a contribution, he replied: "Yes, Frances, you shall have something, but on condition that you come for it in broad daylight wearing

men's boots." It was jocosely said, and not intended to be taken in earnest. But in a short while Frances appeared as described, and was duly rewarded for her courage.

Accompanying Rev. Father Istas on a collecting tour through the country, a farmer whom she accosted for a contribution, offered her a hog, on condition that she herself drive it away immediately. "Certainly," she replied, "I shall gladly do it." A rope was tried to one of the animal's hind legs; she took it and tried to drive away her prize. The animal, feeling her inexperienced hand chose, as might be expected, to go backwards, rather than forward. It was towards evening before she arrived at one of the city gates. The toll-gatherers wondered not a little, laughed at the unusual spectacle, and on hearing her tale, let the heroine of charity pass without exacting from her the usual toll.

8. Meanwhile, though very busy collecting provisions for the poor, she did not omit her ministrations to the sick, but often watched all night at their bedside. Indeed, she deemed it a privilege to do this. She was an excellent nurse, and attended to all the little wants of the sick and of the rest of the household. If there were children, she would give them a mother's care. She knew how to cheer desponding hearts, and to encourage them to bear their trials with resignation. Those privileged to have her as nurse would call her an angel. In later years, her assistant related that on such occasions the sick would often ask her who the angel was that came to them with her. "She

seems to belong to another world. We feel heavenly consolation and strength when she is here." And she would reply: "Do not ask me to tell you this angel's name; let it suffice that she visits you."

9. Her sister Pauline, who was of the same spirit, writes to a mutual friend in November, 1843, of her life at this time: "Frances is always the same. She is busy most of the time in the parish with her sick, but nevertheless has room in her heart for you and us."

Though she seemed to live now only for her charities, and to think of nothing else, her longing for the religious state continued; but her former almost morbid craving for the penitential Order of Trappistines had vanished. Her thoughts now turned rather to some charitable Order; first, to the Borromean Sisters; and later, when she had begun her work amongst Rev. Father Nellessen's penitents, she had a preference for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She writes: "Though I never manifested myself fully to Rev. Father Istas, I nevertheless several times insinuated to him that, dearly as I loved my present occupation among and for the poor, it did not satisfy me; and that I only waited to be free, to consecrate myself entirely to God in some religious Order. At that time I thought of selecting the Congregation of the Good Shepherd. The good priest did not disapprove of my resolution; he rather praised it, and remarked, that though I might do a great amount of good amongst the poor of the parish, he would not oppose me if I followed a higher vocation. Meanwhile, I should reflect before God, and pray diligently."

10. Frances did not feel entire satisfaction, despite of all the work she did for Christ's sake in the service of the poor. She was anxious to give her own self — the tree with its fruit — to God. And indeed, man must not expend himself entirely in external work, praiseworthy as it may be. We belong — as men, and still more as Christians — first of all to Christ, our supreme King. Our services, indeed, belong to our fellow-men; but our mind, our very self, belongs to God. To serve God, therefore, is our first duty, which we must not neglect even when ministering to man. We must imitate the angels detailed to guard us: they never neglect the service of God. "Indeed Thou art worthy of all service, of all honor, and eternal praise." — "It is a great honor, a great glory to serve Thee, and to despise all things for Thee." (Imit. of Christ, III. ch. 10. 4, 5.)

CHAPTER IX.

A severe illness, and a peculiar temptation.—Death, first of Curate Istas, then of her Father.

1. About this time, 1841 or 1842, she suffered a very malignant attack of typhoid fever. She writes: "I yet know the place in Jacob street where I was suddenly attacked. I felt as if a dagger was thrust through my brain into my heart. Half a year before I had nursed several patients through this fever without experiencing any evil effects. On the morning after the attack I arose, but had to take to my bed again at seven o'clock. I confessed to the Rev. Canon, Father Kloth, at

the beginning of the illness, and was ill twenty-six days before the crisis came. The illness, and the customary cupping and leeching, so weakened me, that I was scarcely able to give a sign of life, and could not decline the drinks poured down my throat. I lay with closed eyes, without power to speak, insensible to the outward world. All senses, except that of touch, seemed palsied. From the very beginning I suffered terribly from internal anguish, and from temptations of the kind from which I had been free since childhood. My spirit was darkened as when heavy storm clouds gather at high noon and cover the heavens. Every breath, every movement seemed to me to include a consent to sin. My spirit was so oppressed by fear of yielding to the enemy that the vagaries of fancy usual in this sickness did not occur. This agony continued for many, many days, and was only relieved when God sent me the curate, Rev. Father Istas, like a guardian spirit, to assist me. He visited me every day, standing at the head of the bed without uttering a word, and saying in a subdued but audible voice, the Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, or some other litany, and adding various prayers. His prayer was to me as a refreshing drink in a parching thirst during a burning fever. Once, when he did not begin to pray immediately on coming, I tried to make him understand by opening my eyes that I desired spiritual assistance. My father, who was present, noticed it, and told the priest that I seemed to want something. He then approached nearer, and asked in a subdued tone of voice: 'Do you wish me to pray? I thought

you were too weak.' I tried to answer by a sign, and then prayer brought me the desired relief.

2. "After many days this painful condition ended with another, to me almost incomprehensible temptation against faith in God, which developed in me a series of imaginations that presented themselves to my mind with painful distinctness, and produced a strong internal excitement in me. My eyes sought the crucifix in the darkened room, and it seemed to have been taken away; nevertheless, God gave me such firm faith, that I made interiorly the following act: 'And if all is taken away from me, I believe in God, and in everything taught by the Catholic Church.' Immediately the evil spirit vanished, and an unusually profound peace filled my soul. My relieved mind then wandered off into the usual phantasies; but with some exertion I was able to overcome them." She was then able to receive the sacraments.

"Soon thereafter the final crisis of the illness occurred, and during it quite a luminous picture presented itself to my soul. It seemed to me as if a beautiful woman surrounded by dazzling light and royal splendor stood at the head of my bed. She bent over me, and gave me health. I believe it was only an effect of my imagination; yet it produced a great impression on me and caused me to shed copious tears.'

3. It is remarkable, without doubt, that so virtuous a soul should be attacked by such furious temptations and triumph over them whilst in so weak a bodily state. She made, in this connection, the following pertinent observation: "I surely

believe that in such illnesses, especially in typhoid fever, the mind is often not so bound up in the body, as when in its usual condition; and therefore it is better adapted for the reception of spiritual impressions, both of a good and evil kind. In such a state we may be visited by apparitions of light, and by dreadful ones of darkness; in the same manner God may also permit us to perceive that we are prayed for." This incident is a confirmation of the old experience, that even good Christians are attacked, in severe illness, by temptations, and especially so at the approach of death; and that they are, therefore, very much in need of spiritual assistance and prayer.

This experience was very valuable for Frances in her future ministrations to the sick, as she was to assist during the course of her life, countless dying persons in their last moments. It seems, moreover, that the condition described above, which recurred also in a later dangerous illness, gives us an insight into the interior directions of her soul, especially into the experiences of her childhood, mentioned above. We find that the most grievous temptations assailed her when it was least to be expected, that is, when her natural powers were weakened by sickness, and she was almost defenceless. In health, and when occupied as usual, she was, as a rule, free from great temptations, whilst in her illness she was oppressed also by interior sufferings.

4. The immediate effect of this illness on her mind was a marked increase of grace, and a renovation of spirit, beginning with profound self-

humiliation, whereby she was prepared for the sacrifices she was soon called upon to make, and led on to new degrees of inner life and external ministration. She judges of herself at this time as follows:

"During this illness I often regretted that I had not served God more faithfully. Once especially I clearly and painfully felt that should I die now, I should have to undergo a long purgatory. It seemed to me then that I should just succeed in being numbered amongst the elect, but should have no merits to show. I vividly felt how many opportunities of being good God had offered me, and how my perverseness and vain sensual disposition had abused grace and how I should have stood with my lamp empty if the Bridegroom had come. What could I have done? But loving me, He granted me a new lease of life and a new time of grace. His mercy lengthened for me the precious time of life, during which alone we are enabled to gather the mystic oil for keeping the lamp burning brightly. Oh that I had made a better use of that precious time, or that I were intent on doing so with all my heart at least now!"

5. Those inexperienced in the ways of the interior life, and who think only of the innocent and charitable life of this "prudent virgin," as it was hitherto described, might regard this self-accusation as a morbid self-deception. And yet this estimation of herself is the true expression of supernatural illumination, and a clear proof that God had drawn her soul nearer to the all-searching light of eternity, and thus had more clearly dis-

covered to her the secret depths of human misery, and the sublime heights of divine purity. The higher the sun rises in the interior world, the more does the soul penetrate into self, adopting the views mentioned by Hugh of Grenoble, citing the rule of St. Benedict: "The good in me is not entirely good, and not mine; the evil in me, however, is all evil, and entirely mine." Only in this way can man die to himself, and be mystically united with God. For "he is truly great, who is little in his own eyes." (Imit. of Christ, I. 3.) "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted." (Matth. XXIII. 12.)

6. After the crisis of her illness, and during the slow convalescence which followed, Frances felt a vehement desire for holy Communion. Finally, the physician permitted her to take a walk. She chose the morning, and as she had managed to remain fasting without being observed, she went to church, leaning on the arm of her friend and helpmate, Miss Magdalen Hermans. Father Istas, the curate, was so kind as to minister the Blessed Sacrament to her. Later, she was sent, until entirely well, to the country, into a district of Limburg belonging to Belgium.

7. Soon after her return, the illness and death of Father Istas caused her great grief. Over-exertion in preaching had brought on him a disease of the chest which speedily terminated in death. Letters of Pauline, her younger sister, to a friend, describe the illness, which attacked him on the 3d of January, 1843, and show in what reverence

and love this good priest was held in Aix la Chapelle. Innumerable prayers ascended to heaven for his preservation, countless tears were shed, especially by his beloved and loving poor. The pensioners of St. John's Kitchen held several public novenas, during which the faithful thronged the church in large numbers, and also instituted a public pilgrimage to Mount Salvator for his recovery. As a matter of course, Frances, so intimately associated with his work, was foremost in these endeavors to preserve so precious a life. At first a decided turn for the better in the condition of the sick man gave hope that God would graciously hear so many prayers. But the patient suffered a relapse, and on the day after Ascension he was snatched away in the prime of life from his blessed ministrations. He had called Frances to his death-bed. "I saw him die," she writes, "I shall never forget his last words, nor his last look and cheerful resignation to the will of God. I knelt, and wept profusely. It was just time to attend to the distribution of meals, and I had to betake myself to the poor in the kitchen founded by him. Hitherto I had daily prayed with them for the recovery of our dear, common father, and now we had to say the prayers for the dead for him. When I prayed for the first time, 'Eternal rest grant him, O Lord', my voice failed, and I could not suppress a violent sobbing. The good poor people wept with me, and expressed their condolence at my grief. True, I was resigned to the will of God, but my wounded heart suffered greatly."

8. After the corpse had been clad in the priestly

vestments, she returned to it. The inmates of the priest's house left her alone with the deceased for an hour, so that she might pray and give vent to her grief undisturbed. After praying for a considerable time for the repose of his soul, she began to invoke his intercession and blessing for the deserted poor, for the continuation of the kitchen, and for herself, asking him to leave his spirit to her, his poor child, as Elias had done to Eliseus. "I felt a vehement desire to place his hand on my head, for I had a holy reverence for that anointed, priestly hand, which in life I had always regarded as sacred and never touched, and which he himself, when giving me money or other articles, knew to use so adroitly, that it never touched mine. I hesitated, but finally my desire triumphed. With a look up to God, and protesting in His and the deceased's presence that I acted from the purest motive, I bowed profoundly and placed the dear hand on my head. Oh how fervently I was then able to pray, to beseech God to continue, through the intercession of His servant, the work he had begun, to bless it, and to infuse into me some of the spirit of this saintly priest that I might conduct it in the right manner. O my God, it was a supplication, a prayer which Thou couldst not despise. Thy love, which had hitherto inspired everything, continued effective. Praise and thanks to Thee forever! Amen.

9. "Quite exhausted by the events of the day, I retired to rest in the evening. During my sleep the Lord favored me with a most consoling and sweet dream. I felt myself transferred to a beautiful meadow, and suddenly saw my deceased saintly

friend soaring immediately above me, his dress clinging to him as we see it in representations of the angels, in resplendent transfiguration. Looking at me gently and sweetly, he said: 'Do not weep, but keep your affairs in order, I shall soon come to bring you away.' Then he disappeared. I found myself wonderfully consoled by this dream, and found it impossible henceforth to weep at his death. Though assisting in all the preparations for the funeral, I felt only consolation and joy, and these same sentiments continued when I followed him to burial. My heart and my mind were fixed on God, Who had given him to us. I had, and still have, the firm assurance that he will assist me in life and death. — Oh what inexpressible gratitude I owe to you, saintly priest, pure and faithful friend!"

Henceforth she conducted the charitable work of the deceased almost entirely on her own responsibility, though another priest had offered to assist her. She continued in this employment for about two years, not without undergoing many sufferings and trials, especially in her own family. Her father became more and more indulgent, and left her free in everything, except in her choice of the religious state.

10. And now a new blow, the severest of all, was dealt to her filial heart: on the 26th of February, 1845, her father was stricken, almost suddenly, with death. Acute pains attacked him during the night, and whilst she, with the rest of the family, hastened to his assistance, he sank dying to the floor. Her detailed description of the occurrence indicates that she did not lose her usual presence

of mind and self-sacrificing devotion during the confusion of these trying moments. She sent her elder brother for the physician; she reminded the younger one, a priest since 1840, and professor of religion at the high school of Aix la Chapelle since 1843, to give general absolution to their father; she herself ran weeping to Curate Fey, to have the last sacraments administered; and when a couple of disorderly fellows tried to stop her in the street, she repulsed them, saying: "My father is dying, my father is dying, and has not received the sacraments!" The fellows departed in silent consternation. Soon the priest with the Blessed Sacrament, and the physician came — but they were too late. The latter informed her that her father had ceased to live.

"Oh, what a trial!" she exclaims. "Had my dear father but lived to make his confession or to receive Extreme Unction! But, alas, he died without immediate preparation. Oh, how I prayed and implored, embraced the crucifix and pressed it fervently to my heart, loudly supplicating Our Dear Saviour to grant this grace to my dear father for the salvation of his soul! But the Lord had decreed otherwise; nevertheless, He had not taken away all hope. By this unexpected death a bitter chalice, the bitterest of our life, (I can say this in my name, and in the name of all our family), was given us to drain. We leaned on the staff of our common cross. The power of the Lord was manifested in our weakness, and did not permit us to be confounded. The firm confidence in His mercy was balm to our hearts. May God grant

eternal rest to our good father, and may perpetual light shine upon him!

"The condolence with our affliction was general, for father was a righteous man, and benevolent of heart. Serious affairs remained for us children to settle, but the good Lord disposed all for the best, and I was enabled to continue in my mode of life in the circle of our family with great liberty — but only for a few months."

11. A severe illness, painful spiritual affliction and two most affecting deaths follow each other in quick succession in the life of our servant of God: three visitations by which the paternal hand of God inflicted deep wounds on her heart. But the same Divine Father, Who imposed on her the burden, also sent her the Consoler, the Holy Spirit. She directed her eyes from heaven to earth, from time to eternity, and was thus enabled by the aid of grace from above to penetrate the shell of temporal tribulation, and to discover, accept and relish its kernel in the spirit of faith, hope and charity. By the grace of the Redeemer temporal loss was transformed for her into eternal gain. More and more was her soul freed by such deep affliction from the fetters of this earth, and enriched with the treasures of heaven. For this is the great mystery of our life on earth, that God has so decreed, that by temporal sufferings the most glorious merits and eternal rewards are gained. By the union in the human heart of affliction and charity, of temporal suffering and love of God, are produced the most beautiful gems of our heavenly crown. Of course, without faith, without Christ, man can never find

release from so many and so great evils; but the grace of Christ is great; it can not only deliver us from all evil, but can also transform the evils of life into everlasting benefits.

CHAPTER X.

Frances joins the Third Order Secular of St. Francis.—The first germs of her later Vocation.

1. By a peculiar dispensation of God Frances was induced to join the Third Order founded by St. Francis for persons of either sex living in the world. We give her own account:

"A sick widow, very pious, and a member of the Third Order, whom I nursed in 1843, continued to remind me of the great graces to be gained in that Order. On the one hand, I conceived a great esteem for it, and felt an impulse to join it, though at that time I did not rightly understand the Order; on the other hand, there were reasons deterring me from joining it. First, I feared my father's displeasure; on account of the misconduct of some of its members, he was filled with prejudice against the whole society; secondly, its numerous duties, with so many prayers and fasts, repelled me. I struggled over a year, coming to no conclusion. Finally the woman recovered; my visits ceased, and with them, her importunities.

2. "On the feast of St. Anthony of Padua, June 13th, 1844, I assisted at the afternoon service in the former Franciscan church of St. Nicholas, and heard a sermon by Father Van der Meulen,

director of the Third Order. His description of the virtues of the saint, and of the Order in which he attained to sanctity, greatly impressed me. After the sermon, I hastened to the altar of St. Francis, and kneeling before it, promised the saint to make preparations on the very same day to become a member of his Order. Seemingly beside myself, I was agitated in a manner which I cannot describe; I can attribute the impression received in my soul only to the grace of God. All obstacles to my admission, all fear of remarks of others had vanished. Indeed, it would not have been possible for me to leave the Franciscan church, before making, in presence of the Blessed Virgin, and Ss. Francis and Anthony, the vow to enter the Order as soon as possible. Having done this, I felt myself pervaded by an indescribably sweet peace, tears streamed from my eyes, and after asking pardon of the Lord for having opposed Him so long, I felt as if taken up and borne along by someone. Leaving the church, I intended to visit the above-mentioned widow to learn what preparations I had to make for admission, and to ask her assistance, when to my glad surprise, I found her walking at my side. Under the seal of secrecy, I begged her earnestly to acquaint the director of the Order with my desire, and to bring about my reception as soon as possible. I also furnished her with money to purchase the scapular and cord for me. Next day, she informed me that I could be received on the vigil of the feast of Ss. Peter and Paul. To my impetuous desire this delay seemed very hard to bear. At the appointed time,

Father Van der Meulen received me into the Third Order secular of St. Francis, in presence of the above-named woman. I regarded it as a great, undeserved grace of God."

3. Shortly afterwards, three of her friends followed her example, the two Misses Daverkosen, and Miss Gertrude Frank. As two of these, and later, another Tertiary, even then formed an intimate alliance with Frances, consulted with her about joining a religious community, and finally joined her in the house near St. James' gate, they are, in a manner, the foundation of her future Congregation, and as such deserving of special notice.

Miss Catharine Daverkosen, a tall and stately figure, later a pillar of the new Congregation under the name of Sister Mary, had been reared in Aix la Chapelle amid all the comforts of a wealthy home. For a time, she sought pleasure and peace in the reading of the poets, and in society. But by the grace of God she soon discovered and disdained the vanities of the world, and united herself intimately with Frances, whose life and virtues had deeply impressed her. She was a powerful aid to her in all works of charity, being at the same time a dear friend, though her sober bent of mind and her practical spirit were different from the ideal disposition of Frances. This diversity, however, by no means disturbed the union of hearts by which both were united in God, but rather enhanced in Frances the esteem for her friend's virtue, and the confidence in her abilities.

4. Gertrude Frank, as we shall presently hear,

took an important part in the foundation of the Congregation. She was the daughter of a highly respected director of a manufactory in Laurenceberg, near Aix la Chapelle, whose numerous family was remarkable for its spirit of order, virtue and piety. She was of a grave austere disposition, and not without certain innocent peculiarities. Since her early years she had devoted herself to prayer and penance, always intent on entering the religious state. With some other young ladies of Aix la Chapelle, she had repaired to Angers, France, and was admitted to the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd in its mother-house. But she did not find contentment there, and soon returned home, where she devoted herself anew to prayer and fasting.

5. Joanna Bruchhaus, later Sister Joanna and Assistant to the Mother in the Congregation, and a pillar of the community on account of her unselfish zeal and great virtues, had lost her parents in early youth. Her grandmother, and an aunt, educated her, and formed her to great piety. She was a seamstress, who sewed for a livelihood in respectable houses. Prayer and assisting at divine service were her only recreation. She led so retired and toilsome a life, that until her connection with Frances she left the city only to join in the annual pilgrimage to Kevelaer, and once, in 1844, she had gone to Treves, to venerate the Holy Coat exposed there. Not a shadow of worldly aspirations had darkened this simple, pure soul. She knew Frances and her companions only from seeing them often at church. Meeting Frances one day in the street,

she discovered to her the great desire consuming her, of entering the religious state. But at that time a definite plan had not yet been agreed upon relative to the undertaking. The foundation of a community seemed impossible of realization for some time to come, so that Frances could only promise her assistance in the future.

6. Meanwhile, the germs of the future community planted by God in the souls of Frances and her associates developed. Their indefinite impulses, thoughts and desires attained greater clearness and consistency. The spirit governing their interior impelled them to form themselves also exteriorly into some sort of community life by the adoption of its principles. This impulse received considerable increase when Miss Anna von Lommessen, hitherto foremost in the charitable work amongst the poor, announced her intention to join the Order of the Sacred Heart. When she acquainted Frances with her purpose, the latter used every endeavor to induce her rather to found a community in Aix la Chapelle to devote itself to the service of the poor, which would, at the same time, give an opportunity to many young ladies of joining it and thus following their vocation to a religious life. She offered to join it herself as the least and last, as soon as her affairs at home would permit her to do so; meanwhile, she would give her every assistance and co-operation in her power. She moreover informed her, that impelled by grace, she had in her childhood, in a solemn moment, devoted herself entirely to suffering humanity, and ceased not to aspire to become a member of such a

community as she had seen in spirit. She writes: "Anna listened with evident interest and sympathy, and then responded: 'Oh, how gladly would I join you! But I can not, I dare not. Something in me restrains, and urges me on to somewhere else. It is a great sacrifice to tear myself away; it appears to me a mystical death.' Soon she executed her design.

7. "On this and similar occasions it never entered my mind that God might ask of me what I had asked of Anna. Thus far, God had kept this thought from me, so that according to my recollection it never occurred to me. I spoke a few times to Miss Daverkosen, later our Sister Mary, of the idea of such a community and its work. She seemed greatly pleased thereat, but scarcely thought or planned concerning it in detail. For both her parents still lived, and there was not the least prospect that she would be permitted, in the near future, to leave her home. It is certainly peculiar that we could interest ourselves in such a manner in a product of our imagination, without ever speaking or planning about its realization. Thus stood this affair, when my dear father died, and thus it remained till Pentecost, 1845." Then God Himself interfered, and led to the realization of the design.

8. As the husbandman first prepares the soil, before he entrusts it with the seed, thus God, when He desires to perfect a work in His Church, often for years prepares the interior soil of His chosen instruments, in order to make them capable of receiving the divine seed willingly and well, and

of developing it to fruitfulness. As a rule, they themselves are but little and indefinitely acquainted with the divine plan which they are to execute. By exterior guidance and interior illumination everything is gradually made clear to them, and at the same time they are surrounded in the execution by such obstacles and difficulties, that only heroic confidence in God can accomplish the undertaking. For when God Himself desires to interfere, and to achieve great things, He is wont first to complicate human plans, and to permit things to go amiss, till His time is come. Then the hand of God creates, in an unexpected manner, a new situation. "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matth. XV. 13.) But His plant takes deep root, and demonstrates its higher origin, in order that no one glorify himself, and all good spirits may give glory to God alone.

CHAPTER XI.

Final Decision concerning her Vocation.

1. Hitherto Frances had been without any definite idea concerning the special vocation decreed for her by God. However, without knowing it, she proceeded, as it were in the dark, in the direction of her destination. But in later years she recognized, to use her own words, "that all external circumstances and internal conditions wherein the Lord had placed me, were as it were a preparation ordained by God to form me to what He had decreed from all eternity concerning me. Therefore I can

only be intensely sorry that in general I corresponded so negligently with grace. Because God makes the development and multiplication of this precious gift depend on faithful co-operation, I must in truth confess that there is scarcely to be found on earth a more foolish, perverse, and relatively more responsible person than I was and still am. This is the verdict of truth, proceeding from my most intimate conviction."

Thus far Frances, in obedience, had written her reminiscenses. Then she omitted, for a long period, the continuation of her account, most likely because it was very painful for her to mention certain extraordinary occurences relating to herself. Obedience demanding a continuation of her record, she began her later communications with the words: "May the Blessed Saviour, through the intercession of His most holy Mother, grant me the grace to announce the work of His mercy from a pure and sincere motive."

2. As stated above, Frances was far from the thought of founding a new community. Her opinion of herself, her inclinations, even her firm purpose were so decidedly opposed to such a thought, that she could submit to such a vocation only on coercion, in a manner, by God, as will become evident from what follows. — The instrument selected by God to declare His will to Frances was Gertrude Frank, already mentioned. Christ Himself, she said, had imposed on her the task of manifesting the will of God to Frances.

3. On the feast of Pentecost, May 11th, 1845, Frances had undertaken the preparations for the

funeral of the father of a clerical friend, the successor of curate Istas at the parish church. She felt inwardly moved to perform this work of charity, with the aid of an aged pious lady, in honor of the sepulture of Our Lord. In spite of all the external distractions it caused, she remained recollected in spirit. Towards evening, after divine service, she took two friends with her to pray beside the corpse. She would have liked to have Gertrude Frank with her also, but the latter excused herself, saying, that she had to hasten home, as it was already late.

Whilst these friends were praying beside the corpse, a furious storm arose, which detained Frances till eight o'clock, when she set out for home, where a friend of her brother, the priest, was expected for the evening. Instead came Gertrude, late and drenched through and through. Introducing herself, she said: "I was unable to proceed on account of the storm." Frances was surprised, for, usually, Gertrude did not permit herself to be delayed by storm and rain. Under existing circumstances, this visit was an unwelcome one to Frances, among other reasons because she knew that in the evening Gertrude fasted on bread and water, and she feared she would occasion surprise at supper by adhering to her custom; besides, the rooms at her disposal were destined for two expected guests, and she was at a loss how to lodge her friend. Her first apprehension was soon allayed: Gertrude resolutely partook of the evening meal. Then her brother, sent by her anxious parents, came to take her home; but, strange to say, she opposed, and asked to be

allowed to remain for the night, to which her brother finally consented.

4. Meanwhile, eleven o'clock had come, and on account of the lateness of the hour, and because of the holyday, an additional bedstead could not be provided. Thus Frances, for the first time in her life, had to sleep with some other person. The great French beds of the household having room for three, this circumstance of itself was of no consequence. Finally, when it came to the question who should sleep with her, Frances decided on her sister Paulina, but Gertrude remonstrated, saying: "No; I must sleep with you." And so it was arranged. After retiring to her room, Frances knelt down and silently said her evening prayers, leaving her friend to her own devotions. Going to bed while the other was still at her prayers, she thought to herself: "You may pray as long as you like." She soon fell asleep and did not notice how long the latter continued in prayer, or when she went to bed. "All at once,",," writes Frances, "I was awakened by hearing Gertrude saying to me: 'Are you asleep already? I have something to tell you.' Not favorably disposed by this sudden disturbance in sleep, I replied evasively: 'I am asleep or awake, as you please.' Gertrude continued: 'By command of the Lord I have something to tell you.' This declaration penetrated me with fear and awe, and lifting my eyes in the dark up to heaven, I silently prayed with all my heart: 'Preserve me, O Lord, from deception, and from every vain sentiment accompanying it, and help me that I may not resist Thee by obstinacy.' Folding my

hands over my bosom as if to guard my heart against deception, and, as it were, holding my breath, I said: 'Well, now speak!' This my disposition of mind was unmistakably a grace, and a preparation for what followed. All this transpired in a moment, without reflection, as if, compelled by a higher power, I had to act thus.

"Now Gertrude continued: 'The Lord desires you to leave your home and family, in order to save souls and heal His wounds, in company with those whom He shall indicate to you. I saw Him scourged and covered with wounds. As I bent low to anoint the latter, He regarded me lovingly and said: 'If thou wilt heal me, thou must fulfil my command.' — 'Gladly, gladly,' I replied. And the Lord continued: 'Then go to the city and tell Frances, that she is to leave all, to found a community which is to heal these wounds.' Then the Lord disappeared.

"Gertrude now related that she had desired to fulfil the Lord's command, which at first appeared easy to her, but when she afterwards met Frances, she did not know how to begin, and how to express herself in order to find faith with her. Thus she went home sorrowfully without having attained her object. After a few days, when saying her morning prayers, the Lord appeared to her in a still more afflicted condition. She again fell at His feet, with the same desire and promise. The Lord regarded her sternly, and said: 'First fulfil the command I gave thee.' As she could not go to the city before Sunday, she waited until then, and tried by all means to speak alone to Frances, without

finding an opportunity, and therefore went home very dejected. A third time the Lord appeared to her with a stern, and, as it were, angry countenance, and she weepingly implored His pardon, and promised rather to die than to disobey longer. She also added: 'But will she believe me, O Lord?' The Lord replied: 'That is my affair. Do thou but comply with my behest.' Then she continued: 'When I came to you to-day, and found that you had no moment for me on account of the funeral, I felt greatly perplexed and dejected. I did not know what to do. The only thing that in a manner consoled me was that as to-morrow is a holyday, I must come to town in order to assist at Mass. When I then left, and scarcely was out of the city, the fearful storm and lightning commenced. I proceeded nevertheless. But when the thunder increased, and finally a bolt seemed to strike the ground before me, I could not advance. I feared that the next flash would strike me if I did not immediately comply with Our Lord's behest. 'Have mercy on me,' I exclaimed looking towards heaven. 'Lord, spare me this time; I shall go immediately.' I turned about, and walked rapidly towards the city. Thus I came unexpectedly and at an unseasonable hour to your house. And now tell me, what shall I reply to the Lord? He expects your answer.' Gertrude's language was very simple and plain; but her words pierced my heart like darts of fire, though without wounding it. That came later. Moreover, she spoke, though simply, yet as one having power.

6. "Without asking further questions, I an-

swered: 'Gertrude, if you had known me better, you would have made objections to the Lord. No, Gertrude, you are wrong. You are not sent to me. A soul that has offended God so often, cannot be made use of for such a purpose. Besides, I am awkward, and inapt for everything. Inform the Lord of this the next time.' She replied: 'I have made this objection already of my own accord; but the Lord intimated to me that by that very fact it would be known to be His work, and not the work of man. The lower and more insignificant the person is whom He has selected for this purpose, the more will the honor be given to Him, to Whom it alone belongs. It is for Him alone to select His instrument at will, and also to sanctify and exalt it. Then God showed me by images what He intended: I saw a mite, and before my eyes it grew into a lion. Also, a virgin, small and insignificant, was shown me: and you were this virgin. Soon afterwards you stood, a palm in your hand, at the head of a host of virgins flocking to you from all sides in a long procession, so that I could not see the end; and all these virgins carried palms. The procession was most beautiful, as far as the eye reached there were virgins. Again, a tree grew before my eyes and spread into a great arbor or tent protecting these virgins, and soon changed into a splendid palace, resembling crystal on the outside, and decorated profusely within—a picture of the heavenly Jerusalem. Then I was given to understand that this palace was destined for the virgins shown me. Other things, also, I saw, but I do not know whether I am permitted to reveal them.'

"Impressed with the feeling of my nothingness I answered, that she should tell the Lord I was His handmaid, ready to do everything He desired of me. If He selected the mean and unworthy, He was also responsible for the result; and if it was His will that I should undertake this task, He should also make it clear to me. Recollecting my baseness, I should fear delusion, even if the figure of an angel appeared to me and brought me this message. Gertrude replied: 'I am content with your answer. For the rest, God will provide.'"

7. After a short sleep, both went to church next morning at five o'clock, and received holy Communion. Frances was very confused in presence of her friend, who hastened home immediately after breakfast, and did not refer to the night's occurence with a word. "During the day," Frances writes, "I was as if beside myself. Despite the many distractions and occupations it brought, (the family of the deceased had been invited to dine with us), I remained collected and undisturbed interiorly. An interior unction and happiness pervaded me similar to the sensation I had experienced at Confirmation, but in a higher degree. No doubt, the festival of Pentecost contributed to this. But in the evening of this happy day I felt an oppression and trouble which seemed to me unbearable unless I manifested it to some priest to receive counsel and aid. I decided on Father Van der Meulen, Gertrude's confessor, a zealous and experienced director of souls, who, moreover, must have been acquainted with the affair, and, in case of delusion, was best able to correct his penitent, who was very obedient to him."

8. "Next morning after early Mass, which he said himself, and at which I received holy Communion, I visited him. He knew me well, and was surprised at my early call. Standing, I made known my errand, and he understood me well. Smiling in a knowing way, he said, the result would show if the affair was of God; on his part, he had nothing against it. "To the cross, to the cross," he continued. 'Thence, you must receive counsel, strength and aid. Gertrude is a pure, pious soul, and not easily moved to enthusiasm. She always takes a direct course, even if she should be obliged to crush something in her way. This is what I praise in her. Go on, but beware of cloister fever!'

Though the tears stood in my eyes, I had to smile. The whole conversation lasted only a few minutes. Very much relieved by it, I went home. The man of God had shown me the way and given me support by directing me to the cross. I went straight to the Lord for help, trusting that He would not deny it to me. I then resolved to visit, as much as possible, the churches in which the Forty Hours' Devotion was in progress, and to implore light and guidance of Our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament.

9. "One afternoon, during the same week, whilst taking air in our garden to relieve my troubled heart, Gertrude surprised me by coming in, as she usually never came to the city on week-days. I felt uneasy and disturbed on seeing her. After seating ourselves in the arbor, she immediately inquired whether I had done anything in the

affair. I told her of my visit to Father Van der Meulen, and what he had said. "Very well," she replied, "but this is not enough. You must go on resolutely and without hesitation." She then added some words on the loving and suffering Redeemer and his faithful follower St. Francis, saying that she could find no rest, and was scarcely able to eat or sleep, before being assured that I devoted myself earnestly to the work. I gave her my confidence and made some humiliating confessions to her, promising to take the affair seriously to heart by prayer and renunciation of self-will. This time Gertrude made a lasting impression on me; she appeared to me a messenger of St. Francis. Her emaciated face and its yearning expression reminded me vividly of the saint. When she had left, I leaned back, folded my hands, and looking up to heaven, said weeping: 'My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready. Do but grant me the necessary light, and the requisite grace and strength!'

10. "I might add much more about what passed at that time between Gertrude and myself; but I limit myself to general observations on the course of the affair. She came repeatedly to urge me on, and I generally felt pained in her presence. What she desired of me appeared to me as a heavy cross; only after I had accepted it from the hand of God I experienced its sweetness. She told me many things which I must regard as divine communications. But sometimes she would mix her own observations with the most sacred and important things; then I would express myself rather plainly

and strongly regarding her folly. If my replies had reference to her own views and observations, she always remained calm and easily yielded; but with regard to the real issue, her supernatural communications, she remained inflexible."

11. Despite these repeated urgings, June was drawing to its close before Frances became clearly convinced of the will of God concerning her. "Towards the end of June," she writes, "I knelt, with a troubled heart, close to the altar in St. James' church, were the Forty Hours' Devotion was in progress. At that hour there were only few people in the church. After I had, with many tears, unburdened my heart before Our Divine Saviour present in the Blessed Sacrament, my eyes fell on a banner near the altar, on which Our Lord was represented embracing the cross with one arm. He mildly looked at me. This mild look and embrace of the cross so affected me, that I implored Him with all my heart to send a ray of His divine light into the darkness of my poor soul, that I might learn to know His divine will. At first, I was left in total darkness; but as I persevered in prayer, hoping against hope, light began to illuminate my soul. It seemed as if a fair aurora had dawned in my mind, becoming brighter and brighter, until finally I discerned, as in the strongest mid-day light, what the Lord desired. The Lord spoke to me in spiritual communication even more explicitly than if He had addressed me in words, saying: 'Behold here thy Redeemer, the Saviour of the world! Behold how I submitted for love of thee to all the hardships and fatigues of

life, especially during the three years of my public ministry. See the cross which was my portion from the first moment of my earthly life until I gave up my spirit into the hands of my Father amid the most fearful sufferings. Wilt thou cowardly shrink from that which I embraced, for love of thee and all mankind, with so fervent a desire?' O my beloved Redeemer! Here I can say from my own experience that Thou didst truly 'come to send fire upon earth, and Thou desirest it to be kindled.' O ardor of my heart! Cease not, notwithstanding my unfaithfulness, to draw me to the imitation of my Saviour. Now I knew that it was the Lord Who called me, and I comprehended what He desired. I was also ready to begin the work, though I hardly understood myself. For, confiding firmly in God, I imagined we should surely find the way, if we would follow the guidance of Providence."

In her second account she adds: "It seems that this was a communication from and an operation of God; for the impression which remained of it in the soul of Frances (she speaks in the third person) was such a lasting one, that many years later, when she wrote the statutes of the Congregation, its recollection inspired the writing of paragraph 25: 'On the ministrations of charity.' "

12. It is praiseworthy that Frances was cautious against delusion during the incidents related above, and that she undertook the execution of the task imposed upon her only after continued prayer, when God Himself had manifested His will to her by an interior assurance. Otherwise she could

not easily have been persuaded of her vocation, and would not have overcome her internal resistance. We well know, that in so-called visions the danger of delusion is ever present, and that a careful scrutiny of spirits is therefore essential. In the case of Frances, this scrutiny was applied, especially by Bishop Laurent, who carefully examined the deposition of the above-mentioned Gertrude, and gave a written testimonial in favor of the supernatural manifestations, which she claimed to have received. Moreover, indications of the truth of these manifestations are not wanting in the above account of Frances herself, because she was by no means credulous, but guarded against deception with the greatest possible precaution.

13. There are three kinds of supernatural manifestations, incitements or apparitions; namely by operation on the exterior senses; if, for instance, the ear hears words distinctly spoken; then interiorly, by operation on the inferior powers of the soul, namely in visions of the imagination; finally, by so-called intellectual visions or communications, which occur much more rarely, and are more sublime. It seems to have been one of the latter kind that freed the servant of God from all hesitancy. The two first kinds are subject to many and various deceptions and hallucinations, and must not be easily credited. It is peculiar to God, and to God alone, to speak to the inmost soul words that are at the same time actions, that is, words that effect the designs of God in the soul and at the same time give to it an absolute assurance. God dwells in the inmost soul, that being

the part most directed towards Him. Within this sacred abode alone He directly effects His operations. (S. Bonav. II. Sent.) Therefore it is the general doctrine of mystic divines that the third kind of visions is free from delusions, provided that the visions are purely intellectual.

14. On the decisive period of her life now following, Frances makes the following observation in her memorandum-book:

"1845—1861. On the holy feast of Pentecost. To-day is the sixteenth anniversary of the conception of the Congregation. Five months did the Spirit Creator permit it to rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Then the forming hand of the Almighty Father gave it over, in five members, to St. Francis in honor of his wounds or stigmata of love. Pray for thy poor children, O holy Father Francis!"

CHAPTER XII.

First steps towards the accomplishment of the undertaking.—Frances leaves her home.

1. "I now began," continued Frances in her account, "to consult with Gertrude, who glowed with holy zeal for the undertaking, how we should set about the accomplishment of our design. Gertrude made many proposals, about which we often differed. These long and calm deliberations served to give us a clearer conception and a most correct comprehension. Gertrude induced me to divulge our plan to Catharine Daverkosen, my dearest friend, who, she said, must join us,

"because the Lord Himself pointed her out to me." The other associates, she added, must be selected by Frances. "The Lord moreover said that I should not receive the religious habit," Gertrude observed, "and that I should die at 33 years of age." This prediction really came true.

2. "One evening," continues Frances, "when Catharine Daverkosen came to visit me on her return from the Forty Hours' Devotion, I drew her into the arbor of our garden, and asked her whether Gertrude had told her anything. She replied in the affirmative, and, good soul as she was, immediately signified her intention of leaving her parents, to whom she was very much attached, and who loved her dearly in return, to join us. She declared herself willing to agree with everything that Gertrude and I should resolve upon; we should only pray that her parents would give her the required permission, which would be very difficult to obtain. She was sure that to get away she would not only have to show great determination, but would moreover have to resort to stratagem. She therefore asked permission of her parents to visit her sister in Mannheim for the summer, and easily obtained their consent. A few days before setting out on her journey, she informed her parents affectionately, but firmly, of her resolution, and then went away, intending to remain with her sister until she could join us. Good and pious as her parents were, they did not and could not understand their daughter's project. Our undertaking must have appeared foolish to them; they did not know what we aimed at, for

the little we could say about it was not sufficient to enlighten them. Altogether, I do not understand how our families could permit us to proceed at that time without opposition. It seemed as if they were forced, and could not resist."

About this time Frances confided her project to another priest, Curate Sartorius, the best friend of the deceased Father Istas. "He expressed himself very soberly and coldly concerning our plan."

3. The next step now was to find the means for making a beginning on a small scale. Circumstances made the project very discouraging. Catharine's parents hoped their daughter would change her mind in Mannheim, and abandon the project: a dowry was not to be thought of at the time. With Frances, affairs went not much better. Gertrude had about 200 thalers at her disposal. To begin, it was necessary that they should have at least a small dwelling. In this strait, the two friends had recourse to a very pious and wealthy elderly lady, the widow Teresa Beissel, neé van Houtem, and acquainted her with their project. She approved of it, and offered to rent a house for them for three years in any part of the city, and added, she hoped to be able to pay their rent even after that time. "Oh," replied Frances, "that is more than sufficient; it is rather too much. So we are ready."

4. Now it was time for Frances to acquaint her family with the project and to sever the intimate bonds that united her to her home, her brothers and sister, and also to her sponsor, the aged Canon Deboeur. According to her own confession this

separation cost her not a little self-denial, as she was well aware of the far-reaching consequences of her step. The will of God called for the sacrifice, therefore it had to be made. Having recommended the matter most fervently to God, she resolved to acquaint her family and her sponsor in a letter, among other reasons because the latter was very deaf. "My dear relatives," she writes, "acted as true Christians. Amid tears they expressed their sorrow to see me leave them, adding however, that they would place no obstacles in my way when there was question of the will of God, and that they would do all in their power to assist me. Oh, how I thanked the Lord for His aid in that hour! But with the old priest matters did not proceed so smoothly. After reading the letter he locked himself in his room. This grieved us the more, because he was very infirm, and dependent on our services. On the second day, he called in one of his friends, the Rev. Mr. Classen, later auxiliary bishop of Cologne. He had been my mother's confessor, and always had been an intimate friend of our house. He succeeded in calming his aged friend, who could scarcely persuade himself to be resigned to the inevitable.

5. Great crises of life are usually followed by clouds which darken the soul and unsettle the will, deceiving it by the delusion that a higher good may be attained by means other than those ordained by God. Short as the storm may be, it is none the less severe.

Frances had her full share of changes in the frame of her mind, and of disagreements with her

monitor, Gertrude. She writes, in her second account: "We disagreed, in presence of Father Van der Meulen, concerning the execution of our plan. Gertrude maintained that Our Saviour desired that we should live strictly and exactly according to the rule of St. Francis, imitating his poverty and penance. On my part, I feared this might interfere with our charitable ministrations, which were to be the object of our community. At that time I erroneously believed that the Order of St. Francis demanded strictest seclusion from the world, in other words, a cloistered life, which would have rendered works of mercy impossible. For this reason I offered opposition. Quite unacquainted as yet with the spirit of St. Francis, I insisted that Our Lord required of us the exercise of charity and mercy after the example of St. Catharine of Siena; our object was to save souls for the Lord, etc. In the heat of the discussion I used some expressions which might have offended Gertrude, but she remained calm and quiet. Perhaps the priest was amused at this episode, for, to terminate our arguments, he said smilingly: "If the ladies wish to quarrel, let them step outside." Gertrude then sought to reassure me, saying: 'Works of charity must not be omitted.' Suddenly all became clear to my mind, and I perceived that the one could and should be attained in connection with the other. Calm, and filled with interior peace and courage, I concluded the discussion with the words: 'We shall take St. Catharine of Siena for our model.'

"Scarcely arrived at home, I experienced a severe

temptation. In the first place, it attacked me in the form of an intense love for my family; it seemed impossible to me to leave it. Then the recollection of the liberty I now enjoyed at home, and the consequent advantages which I should gain for my poor were set before me in so enticing a manner, that, for a moment, my resolution yielded, and I thought of withdrawing, and leaving the execution of the project to my friends. I strove to subdue my excitement by making acts of love of God, but without effect, until the Lord came to my assistance in a manner I had never experienced hitherto. He excited in me a terrible fear of endangering the salvation of my soul by disobeying His divine will, and I submitted, I confess, for fear of hell. As far as I can remember, this is the only time that God compelled me by fear to obey His adorable will. I felt greatly humbled thereat, but learned also to know my weakness, insufficiency and misery.

6. "In July, 1845, on a Sunday, Gertrude demanded of me that I commit to paper what had been done in the matter until then, at least its most important features. "Write also," she added, "that we begin in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and under the patronage of the Blessed Mother of God, and our holy patrons." As I wrote, she stood behind me, looking at me, and when I read what I had written, she approved of it."

Although this document contains only what has been already related at length, we deem it opportune to copy it *verbatim* from the original, which is still extant, because, in a manner, it contains the germ

of the future community, together with such facts as are attested by both as truth.

"It was on Pentecost, during the night of Sunday to Monday, when a soul remarkable for simplicity caused me to have a great shock. She demanded of me, (she said in the name of God), to begin a certain work without delay. What she said was so impressive, and withal so in accord with my views and inclinations, that I was greatly astonished, and, at the same time, overpowered. After more mature reflection, courage failed me, and a ponderous burden oppressed my soul, because she insisted that I was to be placed at the head of the affair. I felt the need of expressing myself, and did so with that person's consent, giving voice to her own manifestations. I suffered for several weeks, until it became clear to me that I must part from my family and must do everything else necessary to gain my liberty. It was done, and in this respect I was free. But a disagreement occurred between us, and the realization of our project, that is, the preparation for it was impeded. This was a severe trial. But thanks to the Lord for all, whether difficult or pleasant: for just by means of this diversity of opinion the most holy will of God became manifest to us. So we are now ready, three of us, to associate for the purpose of devoting ourselves after the example of Our Divine Lord to works of charity, as far as our strength shall permit. For this end, we intend to part from our families, in order to observe the three evangelical counsels. May the Lord, Who is pleased by a pure intention, and Who regards

rather the good will than the deed, give us His holy blessing! And so we propose in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and under the protection of the holy Mother of God, of St. Francis, and of St. Catharine of Siena, to begin confidently, ever resolved to become more and more like unto our divine Model by obedience, poverty, humility, purity and charity.—In July, A. D. 1845."

7. But her interior trials were not yet ended. On the eve of the feast of St. Dominic, August 3d, she felt a violent repugnance to the undertaking. Gertrude was present, when a distaste for and an aversion to the whole project seized her, which seemed a kind of angry rebellion of nature, such as she had hitherto never experienced. To prevent a passionate outburst, she retired to an adjoining room, threw herself on a bed, pressed her face into the pillow, and freely gave vent to her tears. As calm and quiet return after storms and showers, thus also with her: when the paroxism was over, she experienced a strange restfulness. She trustfully went to church with Gertrude, made her confession, and prepared herself in great interior peace and devotion for the feast of St. Dominic.

8. Meanwhile, the pious lady mentioned above had found a suitable house just beyond the gate of St. James, which she rented for three years. It was to become vacant on the 1st of September, and it was decided that as soon as they could take possession of it, the beginning of the community was to be made. But as the inmates of the house did not find a suitable dwelling before the 1st of October, and therefore could not remove, it

strangely happened that the little community, unexpectedly and contrary to their previous arrangements, took possession of this house on the 3d of October, the eve of the feast of St. Francis. The four already mentioned had been joined by a pious girl, Catharine Lassen, who had hitherto lived with her parents, helping her mother in the household.

9. Previously, in the month of August, the Rev. Curate Fey had invited our servant of God to retire for a few weeks with the Sisters of the Holy Cross at Liege, there to school herself in community life. These Sisters, founded only a short time before by Canon Habets and Miss Joanna Haase (Mother M. Teresa), followed a vocation similar to the one aimed at by Frances. She gladly availed herself of the opportunity, never thinking that her vocation would be severely tested there. Let us listen to her own recital:

10. "The three weeks that I remained there were a most happy time for me. It was my first experience in a religious community. The order visible throughout the whole house, the peace of God dwelling everywhere, the charitable object of the community, especially the care of female convicts and of fallen girls desirous of reformation—all this pleased me so well, and had such an attraction for me, that I conceived an ardent desire of joining this community. For a long time I entertained this thought, and fervently implored God to release me, and assign the plan formed for Aix la Chapelle to someone else. Then I began to confer with the Superioress. I asked her to receive me

into her community and to found a house in Aix la Chapelle. My friends would be sure to follow me, and thus her community would be reinforced by German members. She referred me to the Director and confessor of the community, Rev. Father Habets. He was not unfavorable to my reception, but would promise nothing relative to the foundation of a house at Aix la Chapelle, at least not for the immediate future. Still, he did not dismiss me without hope.

11. "In the afternoon, I went to the chapel, which was situated in the most retired and quiet part of the house, in the uppermost story, and renewed my prayer for the realization of my desire before the Blessed Sacrament. It was during the time of silence, and the most profound quiet prevailed throughout the house and in the remote chapel. Nobody was about when I fell on my knees in the last pew, buried my face in my hands, and with abundant tears, began to pour out my heart before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, how I implored, how I importuned Him to release me from the other project! I made the most solemn promises to serve Him faithfully until death, if He would but permit me to remain as His least servant in this community. I represented to Him whatever I could think of — how He might change His plan, how then everything would proceed better, and I repeated with a flood of tears, that He should have mercy on me and release me.

12. "The solemn silence was broken only by my sobs. Then — suddenly, there resounded a sweet, penetrating voice from the altar, even from

out of the very tabernacle. Kneeling in the pew, my face buried in my hands, I lifted my head in terror, and looked towards the place whence the voice came. No mortal being was visible. I listened in surprise; indeed, the mystical voice came from the tabernacle, and repeated the words: 'Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?' And again: 'Simon Peter, lovest thou me?' — 'O Lord, Thou knowest all: Thou knowest also that I love Thee!' was the short, the only reply.

"O powerful word of my Lord, full of that divine potency which at the same time operates what it demands! O word, penetrating the soul and fructifying it with grace — how effective didst thou show thyself in her who just before had been so forlorn, so desolate and cowardly! After the happy moment had passed away, I quickly arose, and looking about me on all sides for fear of having had a witness, I dried my tears.

13. "The impression made by this address remained unimpaired throughout the day. I was as if transported, as if dead to all external things, and yet I was able to attend to all my duties with greater facility than at other times. During the evening devotions I wept freely, but they were silent, sweet tears. The Superioress offered a few remarks, but I believe all I replied was that I was a poor captive of the Lord. I never again mentioned the proposal I had made to the Director. I was convinced that by doing so I should oppose the will of God, and it would have been impossible for me to refer to it again. I never mentioned the mystical address to anyone. Only many years

later I revealed it to a priest. However, I am not certain whether or not I intimated it to Gertrude."

14. From this moment she could no longer doubt that God had imposed on her the heavy cross of serving as Superioress of the proposed community. She was now filled with such confidence in God, that she no longer permitted herself to become discouraged, though the thought of her incapacity often made her feel the pressure of the burden. She employed the remaining time of her sojourn in the convent in writing down some rules for the community life she was soon to enter upon. The intercourse with the good religious and with the penitents, her own observations, and some instructions imparted to her by the excellent Superioress, served her, she says, in good turn at a later period. Filled with emotion and gratitude, she left this blessed abode after a sojourn of three weeks, and returned to Aix la Chapelle.

15. Frances, Catharine Daverkosen and Gertrude had agreed to meet at Cologne on the 24th of September, to enter on a retreat in some rooms rented for the purpose by the latter. These rooms, usually occupied by students now absent on vacation, did not at all correspond in their furnishings with the spirit of their present inmates. Frances proposed to her two companions some regulations collected at Liege and from pious books, so that they might follow a certain order from the very beginning of their community life. On the 28th of September she suffered an attack of erysipelas, the first in her life. Her face swelled to such proportions, that she was unable to open her eyes, and

her condition became so alarming, that it was necessary to consult a physician. It seemed impossible that she would be able to make the journey to Aix la Chapelle with the others, to occupy their new house on the 3d of October. The physician prescribed effective remedies, and with such good results that he himself was astonished at the speedy cure. On the 2d of October Frances was able to go out, and on the following day she started for Aix la Chapelle with her companions.

16. "At half-past six on Friday evening," Frances writes, "we arrived at Aix la Chapelle. On account of the amount of baggage brought by Miss Daverkosen from Mannheim, we took a wagon, and proceeded directly to our new home, No. 12, beyond St. James' gate. The two remaining Sisters, Joanna Bruchhaus and Catharine Lassen, during the last two days, had cleaned the house, which had been left in a very untidy state, and made the necessary arrangements for our coming. While driving towards our home the peals from several belfries announced the vigil of the feast of St. Francis. This served to increase our recollection and fervent disposition. We saluted in spirit Our Divine Redeemer present in the Blessed Sacrament in the churches of the city, and placed ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Francis, whose feast had already been inaugurated by first Vespers. At the door of our future abode we were received by the above-named two Sisters in a most cordial manner. We knelt for a short prayer, offering ourselves as fervently as possible to Our Dear Lord, and placing ourselves entirely at His disposal."

17. With this step, decisive for her whole future life, the first part of Frances Schervier's career is closed. For many years in the dark concerning her vocation here on earth, but enlightened as to her eternal destiny, she had proceeded, although resisting sometimes, in a direct course, despite the devious and intricate paths through which she had been led. From her earliest youth the call, "*God alone*," had resounded in her heart, and God alone was her goal in the inmost depths of her soul. This direction of the mind led her not only straightforward to God, but also, at least spiritually, to a separation from and abandonment of everything that is not God. The external separation from the world and from family ties, which God exacts and completes in a most effective manner from all at the end of their lives, occurs with those specially called at a previous period of life, and is but the external manifestation of that interior life which is at the same time a spiritual death, a spiritual egress from the Egypt of earthly life.

18. The subsequent exterior and interior life of Mother Frances, as we shall henceforth call her, is intimately connected with the development, ministry and trials of her community. She lived only for the Congregation and its objects, but not in such a manner that the Congregation itself did not react on her. Continually spending and sacrificing herself for others, she herself also received purification, illumination and perfection. At all events the sanctification and perfection of souls lies in the attainment of and in the co-operation with their vocation. Guided by the hand of God,

Frances had been gradually prepared and endowed with extraordinary gifts for her vocation, and had then been transplanted as a most promising fruit-tree from her family into the garden of the Church. There she was destined to grow in the community in personal sanctity, and to attain the spiritual fertility. With the growth of the community increased also the cares, labors, sacrifices and trials, and this was the way by which God intended His gifts to be matured and perfected in her. The cross of office, with its innumerable duties, obligations and trials, which she so feared, was to transform her soul into a pure, perfect image of Christ.

For this reason, in the following Book, she will be considered especially in her relations as Mother Superior of the Congregation, the more so, because her own account of the development of her interior life ceases, and the "Annals," and her letters, refer mostly to the affairs of the Congregation in general.

BOOK II.

INCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE POOR OF ST. FRANCIS,

UNTIL THE

PROMULGATION OF THE MAY LAWS.

CHAPTER I.

The First Establishments and Ministrations of the Sisters.

1. Thus, then, by dispensation of Divine Providence, the five "prudent virgins" were gathered into the little house beyond St. James' gate, on the eve of the feast of St. Francis, 1845. Kneeling for a short, fervent prayer, they abandoned themselves to the will of God, and placed themselves entirely at His disposal. Then Gertrude, with the three others requested Mother Frances to assume the direction of the little community, and to prescribe rules which they might observe. She, however, resisted, declaring that the Superioress must be elected. "We invoked the Holy Ghost," she writes, "and the rest cast their votes for me. Despite all previous occurrences, I could not suppress a sigh of anguish; but soon recollecting myself, I took up the cross, because it was God's will, though I should sink under its burden. To introduce a certain order at once, I prescribed, with the help of the notes gathered at Liege, preliminary regulations for observance, and ordained that we should call each other 'Sister'. Sister Gertrude reminded the others that they must call me 'Mother'.

2. "I was quite bewildered by conflicting emotions, and found great difficulty in adapting myself to my role. On the one hand, a higher power compelled me to accept the office of Superioress, on the other it seemed quite ridiculous that I, so deficient in the necessary qualifications, should

assume this office. I was of small stature and without native dignity; moreover ignorant and uncultured, deficiencies apt to be noticed by all. As a consequence of typhoid fever I had lost my hair, and kept the new growth short, so that I resembled rather a child than an adult. Catharine Daverkosen, now called Sister Mary, because there was another Catharine amongst us, seemed best fitted for the office. Pious, of dignified bearing and captivating address, she possessed in a high degree all the qualities attributed in Holy Writ to the "valiant woman". I had voted for her; but as the sisters elected me, and as the will of God had been manifested in the matter otherwise, I had to submit. It had to happen thus, that the foundation of the community might be recognized as God's work." The age, at that time, of the five members of the community, was: Frances 26, Mary Daverkosen 31, Gertrude Frank 29, and the two remaining Sisters 26 years.

3. A paper written by Mother Frances apparently before election, contains the following: "Having resolved of our own free will to observe the three evangelical counsels, living in conventual community, and to devote ourselves to the service of the sick and poor, and to the reformation of fallen females, we bind ourselves to order our life and work according to the following rules:

"Christ, our Divine Spouse, is to be our Model, our life, our strength, the inspiration of our souls; Mary is to be our Mother; St. Francis our Father; St. Vincent de Paul, St. Catharine of Siena and St. Mary Magdalen are to be our special patrons.

Convinced that we must have a Superioress to obey, who is to direct and manage everything, being above us in position, but equal to us in everything else, and who is to walk before us in the practice of poverty and humility, in the faithful observance of the rule and in love for the Crucified and His members: we intend, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to elect one. And in the presence of God we promise Him, our God, most punctual obedience in the person of this our Superioress. — *Veni, sancte Spiritus!*"

We called the declaration written in July the first germ of the Congregation: from the above document we collect that this germ was now in process of development. God's works for mankind, like nature's products, assume their true form by internal and gradual development. The word of God is likened to a seed: if received in good soil — a soul well prepared — God cherishes and fosters its growth in a thousand ways, and gives it increase.

4. Mother Frances relates: "Whilst at Liege I had pricked my right thumb with a needle. By and by the seemingly slight wound turned into a malignant sore, so that my hand became almost useless for a time. During the process of healing the flesh of the thumb was literally renewed. I always regarded this as remarkable; at the same time it pleased me, because with this thumb I make the sign of the cross on the Sisters' forehead.— On the morning of the feast of St. Francis, October 4th, we went in two parties to the two former Franciscan churches then in Aix la Chapelle. I visited

the church of St. Nicholas, where we received holy Communion. I knelt before the altar of St. Francis, and felt as if transported during the whole time I was there. Communing with Our Saviour in great recollection of spirit, I felt myself embraced by St. Francis like a child in its mother's arms. This peculiar spiritual impression, which elevated me above all suffering, continued for about two or three weeks, but in a less degree than on the first day."

5. Internally and externally, the life of the Sisters was now ordered in conventual manner. "In the streets," writes Mother Frances, "we did not speak to each other, and to strangers only when necessary. Visitors were limited to brief calls, and after nightfall they were received standing. Silence, always the rule throughout the house, was observed more strictly at certain times and places. Spiritual reading, and a lesson in catechism, were among the daily exercises. The office of the Blessed Virgin, at that time in the vernacular, was said in choir every day. The household duties were performed in common, at which, on account of my sore hand, I was for a time rather a hindrance than a help. From our house we now attended my former charge, the sick poor of St. Paul's parish, who had been attended by two friends during my absence, and soon we were engaged to do the same in St. James' parish, in which we lived, and where we also established a charity kitchen."

From other sources we learn that Mother Frances gave an instruction every day on religious vocation and life to the Sisters, and by her unctuous

addresses imbued them with her own spirit of love for God and the neighbor. At the same time, she continued to commend them to God in fervent prayer that He might continue to assist them. And she adds: "As we had placed ourselves entirely at the disposal of God, we confidently hoped that He would employ us according to His most holy will."

6. Providence really did call them to a work, in which they had full opportunity of manifesting their charity. "In November of the same year," writes Mother Frances, "Our Lord sent us our first penitent. It happened in this wise: A wealthy young man, who lived in concubinage, died suddenly of a malignant fever. Father Dominic, the Superior of the Alexian Brothers, who had been called a few hours before the patient's death, addressed some words of reproof and exhortation to the young man's companion in sin, which so impressed her that she resolved to follow his advice and seek refuge with us. By thus bringing a stray sheep into our newly organized fold of the Good Shepherd, the pious, zealous priest had unexpectedly conferred on us a great grace. Soon, I know not how it happened, penitents flocked to us from all sides; it seemed as if the grace of God was at work among them, leading them to us. Before long we had twenty, even thirty, in the narrow limits of our house. We were without aid from the outside."

7. Before continuing, let us mention the contradictions and trials which Mother Frances and her little community had to suffer. It was

necessary that they should come, if the seal of the cross, which God impresses on His work, was not to be wanting.—The very fact that Mother Frances had left home and her charitable ministrations had displeased most of her acquaintances; but receiving those "stray sheep" in her house and collecting alms for their maintenance—this raised a mighty storm of ill-will against her, and caused her to suffer severe rebukes. In her temperate manner, Mother Frances refers to this as follows: "The people of the parish in which I had been born and reared, and who had been accustomed for years to see me engaged among the sick and poor of the district, took it amiss that I retired more and more. Still less could they understand that we received the ill-famed and fallen into our home. The people of means began to withhold their confidence, fearing that I would henceforth bestow their gifts, which had hitherto gone to the poor, on the wards of our house. Moreover, they disapproved of my leaving home, where I might have easily continued my ministrations for the benefit of the poor and of the parish."

8. Mother Frances, continuing to solicit alms for the poor, and attending personally to their collection, was exposed to many humiliations. In most cases she was, at best, received with distrust and ominous shakings of the head; very often, too, she had to hear the most bitter invectives; or else she was ridiculed because of the "adventurous young women, who, instead of attending to their duties at home, associated with persons of ill fame, and even requested their benefactors to feed them."

In one instance, she was subjected to very abusive language by a wealthy lady who had hitherto been most liberal towards her; but Mother Frances bore the attack in silence. As a result, the lady resumed her former kindness.

The storm assumed such proportions, that it seemed best to let the collections be attended to for a time by others. She writes: "I asked the good lady who paid our rent, Mrs. Teresa Beissel, to undertake for us the annual collection for the poor, to which she consented. Only exceptionally Sister Mary or I accompanied her. But we continued in the personal service of the poor and sick."

9. Even the street urchins could not but satisfy their love of mischief at the expense of the "bigots," as they called the Sisters. In later years, Mother Frances would smilingly relate some of their exploits. The silent and sombre-dressed figures were objects of curiosity to the boys, and they were always on the alert to find out what was going on in the mysterious house. They peered through the basement windows and cellar holes, and if they happened to discover a Sister, they would call her all kinds of names.

10. Pious persons, too, the clergy not excepted, shared in the general disapprobation of the Sisters. But there were exceptions, and among these was a man who during his whole life proved himself a true friend, counselor and confessor of the new community: the Rev. Dr. Gregory Kloth, at that time parish priest of St. James, and consequently their pastor. He was a courageous defender of the Sisters. From the pulpit, he recommended

their undertaking to his parishioners, and persuaded some good women to collect for the poor and sick in his parish, as Mrs. Beissel did in St. Paul's. He even accompanied the Sisters several times on their collecting tours. Mother Frances also took up her rounds again. To give the working class an opportunity of contributing their mite, a collection was taken up Saturdays, after the laborers had received their wages. These good people were very liberal, considering their circumstances, and willingly shared their hard-earned money with their less favored brethren. Mother Frances had a great regard for this liberality of the working people, and esteemed it as a pledge of divine blessing on her work.

11. God subjects His elect to trials, but does not desert them. The words of the angel to Tobias, "And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee," (Tob. XII. 13.), contain, with regard to the elect that do not die young, a general rule of divine dispensation. And the higher God intends to lead a soul, the bitterer is the trial. Hence the impressive and general exhortation of Holy Writ: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccli. II. 1.), and the consoling promise: "He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid: for He is his hope." (Eccli. XXXVII. 16.) "But they that did not receive the trials with the fear of the Lord, but uttered their impatience and the reproach of their murmuring against the Lord, were destroyed by the destroyer." (Judith VIII. 24.)

CHAPTER II.

Life and Work of the Community during the first three years.

1. Mother Frances relates: "We remained in the house beyond St. James' gate three years and three months. To speak of the joys and graces bestowed on us there is not an easy task. We were poor but favored children of God." These words are a sufficient indication of the blissful life led in that small house amid poverty and trials on the one hand, with interior, heavenly consolations on the other. As a rule, all new religious communities founded by inspiration of God have the same experience; it is the experience of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, where the assembly of the faithful was "one heart and one soul" (Acts IV. 32.) amid the oppressions of persecution, after having received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Such experience ought to convince us that man's happiness consists not in externals, as with the brute creation, but in the interior, and is therefore vainly sought for in temporal things, which can not content the human heart. On the contrary, where the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost dwells, and rules the heart, there is truly the house of God, in which, in spite of the absence of worldly goods and worldly enjoyments, the lost paradise is regained at least in part.

2. The small community soon found opportunity of extending its ministrations to a new field. Mother Frances was called to a work for which she seemed specially fitted, and wherein she dis-

played the ardor of her soul to its full extent. This work was the reformation, or rather the rescue of those unfortunate beings who, having devoted themselves to sin, are bound to it as if by fiery chains, and escape temporal and eternal perdition only with the greatest difficulty. We mentioned before that she received her first penitent soon after the opening of her house, and that by and by this class numbered about thirty.

3. At first she found great difficulties in providing the necessaries of life for so many. The house itself was made available for so great a number of inmates only by using every inch of space, and the Sisters suffered great inconvenience. The Annals relate:

"The penitents used the attic as a sleeping apartment. At first each one was furnished with a bedstead, the Sisters giving them their own straw pallets and pillows, restricting themselves to what was indispensable. But when the number of penitents increased, bedsteads, and means for providing them, were wanting. The Sisters gave up their own, and placed their pallets on the floor, but even these did not suffice. By and by only one pillow remained for the Sisters, which was used in turn by one and the other during the night. Soon the pallets sufficed no longer, and so the Sisters took their nights' rest on bolts of cloth bought to keep the penitents employed, a bolt of linen serving as a pillow. Shoes also were scarce. On Sundays, when the Sisters and their penitents assisted alternately at the various Masses said at different hours, the same pair of shoes had to be

worn by different persons. Often they even shared their clothing with the penitents." — "These are sweet reminiscences of the first period of our community life," adds Mother Frances.

4. Their food also was very poor, and it was with considerable difficulty that they provided for the penitents, who were always served first, and for themselves. They employed the penitents at sewing, who thus contributed to their own maintenance. Sisters Joanna and Catharine were often busily engaged early in the morning, long before the time appointed for rising, in cutting out and preparing the work, in order that the day's task might be begun at once without loss of time. During the scarcity of 1846–47, when agricultural produce, especially potatoes, the main sustenance of the poor, had failed and everything commanded a high price, the community was in great distress. To relieve the sufferings of the poor, the authorities of Aix la Chapelle established, under the direction of charitable ladies, a public kitchen in every parish for the preparation and distribution of food. The pastor of St. James arranged that the management of the kitchen in his parish was placed in charge of the Sisters. They themselves were content with the poorest fare: they had vegetables and potatoes very rarely, and then in scanty portions. Their dinner usually consisted of soup, and a dish of beans and peas, or barley, boiled in salt water, without any other condiment. All the Sisters being members of the Third Order, meat was furnished them only three times a week, but even then there was too little of it to provide every

Sister with a small portion; therefore it was cut up into minute particles, and mixed with the second dish, so that whoever was lucky might have a taste of it. The evening meal was still poorer. The number of small slices of bread often did not tally with the number of Sisters, and then the stronger insisted on the privilege of leaving theirs to the weaker ones.

5. But all these privations and anxieties were not able to disturb the internal happiness of the little community; on the contrary, their peace and contentment seemed to increase thereby. In the midst of the great world of selfishness their house was an abode of charity — of that charity of which it is written: "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." (2 John IV. 16.) This charity dwelt in the magnanimous heart of the young Superioress, and thence directed, governed, consoled and refreshed the willing souls that had united themselves with her. They witnessed how Mother Frances preceded them in heroic deeds of charity, and in all the exercises of the religious life, especially in poverty and self-denial, courageously giving them the most luminous example, and thus no difficulty deterred them.

6. Though Mother Frances performed the most arduous tasks herself, she expected not a little of the Sisters. She had so high a conception of the religious life, of the struggle for perfection and of the spirit of sacrifice with which a religious must serve Christ, that everything she herself and the Sisters did seemed insignificant and insufficient to

her. With a heart overflowing with charity, her character was far from effeminacy and weakness, and her government of the Sisters was strict from supernatural motives. It may be conceded that during the first years of her office she had not due regard for human infirmity. The same was said of almost all the great founders of religious Orders. They practised heroic virtues and mortifications themselves, and exacted the same of their disciples; their austerities exceeded the common measure, and are, for all times to come, a rebuke to the lukewarm, and an invigorating example to the zealous. Their seeming excess was, without doubt, in accordance with the will of God; for the first fervor relaxes but too speedily. Personal infirmity gravitates from the altitude of great achievements to mediocrity, and even lower, if exalting influences do not prevail. At all events, Mother Frances was strict with herself, and her daily instructions on the practice of poverty and mortification proceeded not from a want of charity, but rather from a charity enlightened, practical and aiming at the highest.

7. The dearer a Sister was to her, and the greater desire of perfection she perceived in her, the more strictly did she exercise her in virtue by reproofs and various mortifications. Thus she would most profoundly humble the dutiful Sister Joanna, whose solid virtue she often praised in later years.

Let us mention an instance of the severe mortification she demanded of the Sisters. In the very cold winter of 1846—1847, one Sunday afternoon

Sister Joanna went with some other Sisters the long distance from their house to the cathedral, to assist at Vespers. Quite frozen on account of their scanty apparel, she invited her companions to step in with her into St. Mary's hospital, which lay on their way, to warm themselves, and where the Sisters provided some refreshments for them. Arrived at home, she was severely reprimanded for having taken such a liberty.

8. Soon two new associates joined the Sisters: Clara Klausener about the beginning of 1846, and Margaret Hamacher about Easter. Their sphere of ministration, too, was extended. On the 19th of November the city authorities placed them in charge of the household affairs of St. Mary's hospital, where the Alexian Brothers some time before had assumed the care of the male patients, whilst a housekeeper and servants were attending to the kitchen, washing, etc. Numerous complaints of neglect, and finally the illness of the housekeeper caused the managers to appoint the Sisters, provisionally first, and later definitely. Sisters Mary and Gertrude were sent there.

After the first storm against Mother Frances had blown past, the Sisters were also entrusted with the care of the poor and sick in other parishes of the city. On the feast of St. Elisabeth, November 19th, 1846, Mother Frances took charge of the syphilitic female patients in the old Dominican building. Imitating St. Elisabeth, who with heroic charity served the lepers, the Sisters devoted themselves to these unfortunates ill with the leprosy of sin, established order amongst the poor

creatures, trained them to work and prayer, sang spiritual canticles with them, instructed them in the catechism, and soon gained such an influence over them, that some, after their recovery, instead of returning to their former life, with the grace of God persevered, and became penitents in the convent of the Good Shepherd.

9. One evening an unknown girl called on Mother Frances and informed her confidentially that she had escaped from a Belgian prison, and begged for shelter to evade the vigilance of the police. "I received her willingly," writes Mother Frances, "and as she was very ill, I gave up my cell and bed to her. At that time we had not introduced enclosure, though we usually observed it. She remained with us two or three days. I consoled and assisted her as much as I could. At the same time my soul was filled with such joy, that I scarcely could restrain myself from showing it outwardly. I seemed to hear Our Divine Saviour saying to me interiorly: 'It is myself whom thou hast received and consoled. I desire to be served by you in the person of poor convicts also in future.' On this occasion I learned that it was God's will that the community should devote itself also to prisoners."

10. During the first year, the Sisters and their charges were obliged to attend divine service in their parish, or in the other churches of the city. But when the number of penitents had increased to thirty, it was thought advisable that they should no longer appear in public. At the instance of their pastor, the Rev. Canon Kloth, the Archbishop

of Cologne permitted Mass to be celebrated and the Blessed Sacrament to be preserved in the little oratory of their house. At the same time the Archbishop permitted one of the priests of the parish church to say Mass twice on Sundays and holydays. Mass was henceforth said, and a short instruction given on these days in the Sisters' chapel. The joy of Mother Frances and of the whole community at this privilege is indescribable. The great King of Heaven took up His abode, in the Blessed Sacrament, in their midst, on the 31st of October, 1846. New fervor animated the Sisters, and in the penitents also was observable the effect of Our Redeemer's presence. "In the two years," the Annals relate, "during which Our Lord dwelt under our roof, He showed Himself indeed as the Good Shepherd, as the Father and friend of the poor. The priest that said Mass for us, usually Curate Müngersdorf, later Provincial of the Lazarists, being engaged on Sundays and feasts as early as six o'clock, we had to be on hand still earlier. Before five o'clock, summer and winter, one of us watched at the door and gave a signal as soon as she saw the priest and his little server, usually Curate Müngersdorf's small brother, so that everything was in readiness when he arrived, and there was not a moment's delay. We are indebted to this clergyman, and to the parish priest, Rev. Canon Kloth, to such a degree for their services during these years, that the community shall never be able to show its gratitude sufficiently to them. The same is due to the Rev. Director Fey, at that time Curate at St. Paul's, who, together

with the pastor, was confessor of the penitents, and later also of the Sisters.

11. "When Mrs. Henry Nellessen, mother of the future Sisters Gabriella and Paula, was informed that Mass was permitted to be said at our house, she visited us with her two daughters and presented us with an alb and a communion-cloth, the first church articles belonging to the Sisters. The lady was so affected by the great poverty of the community apparent in everything, and by the cleanliness and order visible everywhere, that henceforth she became its great benefactress. As a reward, both her daughters subsequently left the world, despite its alluring prospects, and selected this poor Order, then in its formation, in which they lived happily and attained great perfection. Both were Superioresses for many years, and died soon after each other in 1884."

12. About this time Mother Frances was also presented with an image of the Divine Infant, which she greatly prized for its own sake, and on account of its history. In former times it was customary to send such images to Rome and have them placed in the sacred manger which is venerated in the church of S. Maria Maggiore. One of these images had belonged to the Poor Clares in Aix la Chapelle, and they prized it highly. When, in 1803, their convent was suppressed, the last abbess, Frances Teresa Theyssen, had taken it with her, and willed it at her death to her sister, who left it to her relatives. These latter presented it to Mother Frances, thinking that with her it would be duly venerated. In this they were not

mistaken, for the Sisters regarded it as a priceless treasure; but they did not anticipate that it would be their guide to their first mother-house, the former convent of the Poor Clares, where it originally belonged. And yet, some years later Mother Frances was enabled to restore this image to its place there, for the convent was given to her and her community.

The following Sisters were admitted about this time: In October, 1846, Agnes (Sophia Schmitz), died April 15th, 1883; in December, 1846, Bernardine (Elisabeth Hovestadt), died September 16th, 1854; Elisabeth (Lennerz); Anna, (Elisabeth Eschweiler), died January 17th, 1891; in 1847: Mary Antonia (Mary Hesse), died September 22d, 1853; Josepha (Catharine Momer), died March 11th, 1851.

13. Meanwhile, the community continued in oppressive poverty. During Lent, 1848, Mother Frances undertook a collecting tour through Holland, for the purpose of soliciting contributions for the maintenance of her penitents, and to obtain the necessary funds to place one of them, who ardently desired it, with the Trappistines. She writes: "I remained in Holland about three weeks, collecting in all the large towns, among them in Amsterdam, Schiedam and The Hague. The tour was attended by many hardships and privations, and I thank Our Dear Lord even to-day for all I suffered and experienced in that country. For this reason, Holland is doubly dear to me." She says, "doubly dear," because of the aid she received, and the hardships and humiliations she experienced there.

The Annals treat at length of this journey. In the beginning, her patience was put to a severe test. At Sister Mary's instance, one of her relatives volunteered to accompany Mother Frances. Amid great trials, and with ill success, they began their collection at Nymwegen. At The Hague their success at first did not improve, although they had recourse to the Superiors of some religious houses, until the Franciscan, Father Opdenkamp, took pity on them. On his recommendation, and with a suitable attendant, (her companion, tired of the rebuffs and trials, had returned to Aix la Chapelle), she was introduced there and at Rotterdam (to the Franciscans), and hospitably received. After some years this good priest was privileged to see the then so lonely stranger as Superioress of a numerous and ecclesiastically recognized community. At Amsterdam her first reception was anything but encouraging, but finally an aged Beguine offered her hospitality. Later, others interested themselves in her, among them a pious and wealthy lady, the mother of Rev. Bernard Hafkenscheid, the celebrated Redemptorist. At length she returned from this in many respects terrible tour to her little convent home. In later years she was wont to declare that in Holland she had first learned to value the virtue of hospitality; and her experiences there contributed in a great measure to her subsequent practice of this virtue, for which she and her daughters everywhere became noted.

14. Renunciation, labor and suffering are the portion of mankind in this vale of tears. They are aids to virtue, and remedies against that spirit

of worldliness that would satiate itself on things temporal, unmindful of eternity. If, however, a firm faith in Christ and in the crown of immortality promised to them that love God is wanting, it is impossible for man to trample under foot the world and its pleasures, and to pass unscathed through contradiction, persecution and affront. Only he who by faith discerns what a dignity is given to us in Christ, "that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (I. John XXXI. 1.); who cherishes the hope of attaining to the heritage of the Great King; who loves God above self and loves Him alone — such a man regards as of but little import temporal pleasure and suffering, honor and contempt, and is moreover willing to sacrifice his own honor for God's sake. Therefore the exhortation is addressed to all, of "looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebr. XII. 2.)

CHAPTER III.

Unexpected turn in the affairs of the Community.

1. Not without demanding painful sacrifices, and not without sometimes interfering with favorite undertakings and permitting them to come to nought, does God's hand lead His own whenever He intends to elevate them to higher perfection. Mother Frances was destined to undergo this experience in a manner quite unexpected by her.

Ever since she had by the grace of God, amid great sacrifices, snatched away from the grasp of vice a band of penitents, her great soul inclined with ardent zeal to this work of charity. The splendid results, which increased with experience, together with the many cares, trials and contradictions which she had to suffer at the same time, had the effect of making her cling to this work with her whole soul. No sacrifice was too great, no difficulty insurmountable, when there was question of rescuing the wretched victims of human brutality from the sinks of vice. Still more than her superior spirit and her rare force of mind, it was her unlimited charity of heart that compelled the hearts of these unfortunates, steeped in selfishness and sensuality, and who had almost no comprehension of unselfish love, to be devoted to her. As a rule, they felt compelled not only to admire such a charity, but also to love her in return, and turn their look from the ugliness of sin to the beauty of virtue as it shone in Mother Frances, who showed them a mother's love and an angel's purity. For this reason almost all of them were enthusiastically devoted to her, kept no secret from her, took refuge with her in their trials and troubles, and willingly submitted to her guidance, counsel and reproofs. Whoever is acquainted with the great difficulties to be overcome in the reformation and education of these poor creatures, and moreover has a true conception of the character, heart, faith and charity of Mother Frances, will not doubt that it would be difficult to find another person suited in like manner to deal successfully with persons of this class.

2. She did not hesitate to seek out such abandoned girls in their own abode, and sometimes made use of the boldest means for their rescue in a manner rather to be admired than imitated. But it is to be remembered that she never, not even in trifles, decided on anything before having first elevated her mind to God, and sought His assistance. Whenever there was question of acting immediately to help the unfortunate or to save someone's honor, she usually was quite clear as to the will of God, and fearlessly followed the inspiration, even if she sometimes did thereby expose great interests to danger, or even jeopardized her own honor. The happy issue always justified her mode of action, even when it seemed rash, judged by the common rules of prudence. We relate two instances of this kind.

3. In 1850, shortly before the community received the religious habit, it happened that a young girl of extraordinary beauty, converted to the Church by Mother Frances some years previously, succumbed to the snares placed in her way, strayed from the right path and withdrew herself from the observation of the servant of God. Two Sisters out on a collecting tour happened to meet her, and observed that she was an inmate of a house of prostitution. When Mother Frances was informed of this, she resolved to do her utmost to rescue the stray sheep from the fangs of the wolves. In the evening, she disguised herself and sought admittance to the poor girl, and spoke so impressively to her that she succeeded in persuading her to leave the house of ill fame. She remained with

the Sisters, persevered in piety, and died a happy death.

4. Another case, which happened some time later, also serves to show the greatness of her zeal for the salvation of souls. Rev. Curate Schneider of St. Paul's, later a Jesuit, sent her an abandoned girl who showed a sincere desire of reformation. Mother Frances kindly received her. But the girl's fickleness equaled her beauty; she soon succumbed to the promptings of depraved nature, fled from the house, and returned to vice, to the great sorrow of her kind benefactress. After having for a time tasted of the bitterness of sin, she returned to Mother Frances, and implored to be received again, making the most sacred promises. With the greatest charity she was again admitted. But again she yielded to the temptations usual with persons of her class, and attempted flight. Mother Frances being advised thereof, reproved her most emphatically, and prophetically said to her: "Rather than return to your sinful life, you shall become lame." But even these threatening words made no impression on the perverse creature, and she persisted in her sinful design. Then the hand of God touched her: she was suddenly lamed, and to such a degree that she was confined to her sick bed helpless like an infant and had to abandon every thought of flight. This severe bodily affliction became a salutary remedy for her soul. She turned with all her heart to God, led a life of continual prayer, received the sacraments often and bore her heavy cross with admirable patience, even with cheerful gratitude to God. She was wont to relate

the occurrence herself, saying with a resigned smile: "Mother Frances lamed me: she put this cross on me to save my soul." Later, she joined the Third Order of St. Francis, and edified the Sisters by her virtue. They took care of her until 1887, when she was received into another institution.

5. Let us now listen to what Mother Frances herself says about her agency for the reformation of penitents until the year 1849. "At that time I was left without all human aid. I did not even desire it, but rather feared that human interference might prove an obstacle. I was devoted body and soul to the sacred cause of rescuing those stray sheep. Our penitents were more devoted to me than children are to their own mother. I instructed them regularly, and consoled each one in her troubles and trials. To renounce this noble ministry and to separate from my wards seemed to me more arduous than death. To speak candidly, I neglected, on account of this cherished occupation, the duties of my office as Superioress of the Sisters; but I am under the impression that at that time God so willed it. However, I will by no means deny that I have to reproach myself with neglect in the fulfilment of the rest of my duties. As to our life, it was retired and unknown; but our efforts for the penitents were regarded by most persons as useless and foolish. Nevertheless, a priest, a stranger who visited our institution, was greatly edified and surprised, so that he exclaimed: "We must pray that these narrow walls expand, in order to receive more and more such poor creatures." And he added: "Such prayers cannot but be heard by God."

It is quite natural that Mother Frances was devoted with all her soul to this noble and pious work. But perhaps just for that reason God demanded of her the sacrifice of giving up her penitents. The more painful the sacrifice was to nature, the more fruitful it became not only for her spiritual progress, but also for the development of the community, as soon became apparent. God never takes away a gift from His elect without offering, and actually giving, in its place a better one, if they but surrender the first to His holy will for love of Him.

6. The necessity of making this sacrifice was demonstrated to her by the following occurrences. Years before, chief rector Nellessen, whose labors for the reformation of fallen women we have already mentioned, had endeavored to found in Aix la Chapelle a reformatory for fallen females under the direction of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. But in vain; for the bureaucratic wisdom of those days imagined a real danger to the state in the presence of a few ladies of a foreign Order. Later, a lay commission was formed for the same purpose. The year 1848 began to disrupt many a fetter of Church and nation; and after prolonged discussions, when the storm of revolution had already swept away the liberal throne of France, king William IV. permitted, in March of the same year, the foundation of a House of the Good Shepherd at Aix la Chapelle. The gentlemen composing the above-mentioned commission purchased for the institution a former factory building in the *Bergstrasse*, with means furnished by the sisters Helen

and Louisa Fey, whose dowry on their entrance into the Congregation of the Good Shepherd was devoted to this purpose. With the news of the accomplishment of this transaction came to Mother Frances the conviction that she had to give up her cherished work, and that she must transfer her dear penitents to other hands. This unexpected blow received increased force from the circumstance that with the transfer of the penitents, she was also to lose the presence of her Heavenly Guest in the Blessed Sacrament; for the permission to keep the Holy Eucharist in her chapel had been expressly restricted to the time during which the penitents remained in her house. With Mother Frances, all the Sisters were filled with consternation and sorrow at the news. Let us hear, for our instruction and edification, what Mother Frances herself says on her sentiments and dispositions at that time.

7. "At the beginning of our undertaking we had by no means in view to devote ourselves only to one object, or to found the community for the benefit of only one class of souls, but merely and solely to fulfil the adorable will of God by a full surrender to it. Now it became requisite to renounce what had been achieved, though it was ever so dear to us, and to submit with closed eyes entirely to Divine Providence. It was a severe struggle; it seemed as if my poor heart had received its death-blow. Not the thought of renouncing an occupation so signally blessed disturbed me most, but another apprehension at times tortured me fearfully, namely, the terrible idea that Our Dear Saviour was about to reject us, to dismiss us from

His service. Once, when troubled more than ever with this thought, I turned to the Lord with filial confidence and poured out my heart to Him. Behold, the Lord graciously heard me; He opened His Heart to the voice of my supplication, and revealed to me His mercy. I felt that He was with us, and did not intend to desert us; at the same time I understood that He required this sacrifice of us. Without desiring to penetrate into the future, I was ready, with God's grace, courageously to drain the bitter chalice. Henceforth all was well."

In later years, Mother Frances related to some Sisters that what she then regarded as the death-blow of the community, was in reality the means of extending the Sisters' sphere, and of leading them to what they were to attain. She made use of the following comparison: "This occurrence was for the young community what the decay of the two first tiny leaves is that form after the sprouting of a plant. They must waste away to make way for the real leaves."

8. On the 4th of October, the feast of St. Francis, the first Sisters of the Good Shepherd came from their convent at Angers, France, and took up their abode with the Borromean Sisters. Meanwhile, a society of ladies furnished the new house. Sister Euphrasia Fey, a friend of Mother Frances' girlhood, who had shared the care of the poor with her before her entrance into the convent, was Superioress of the new institute. Henceforth the intercourse of these two noble souls became intimate, and remained so until interrupted by

death. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd paid a visit to the small establishment beyond St. James' gate, and were received in a most cordial manner by Frances, who presented their future penitents to them. The latter, sure enough, displayed sorrowful faces and wept tears in abundance. Some of them protested that they intended to remain where they were; but Mother Frances sought to convince them that it would be their gain to be transferred to the new institution. Should they, however be dismissed from it when reformed, she would provide for them; whilst now the will of God demanded obedience of them. On this occasion the day for the transfer was appointed: the removal was to take place on the 21st of November, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

9. The charity of our servant of God was also evinced by the fact that she presented the vestments used hitherto in her chapel to the new institution, because with the transfer of the penitents divine service was to cease there, as already mentioned. True charity unselfishly sacrifices its own interests and advantages for the common good, and regards everything from its real, not from a personal view. The practice of this principle accompanies Mother Frances through life, and is one of the most conspicuous traits of her character.

10. Despite all the exhortations of Mother Frances, the penitents could not reconcile themselves to their transfer; they rather did everything they could think of to prevail on her to let them remain. She writes: "They made the most sacred

promises; and when this had no effect, many of them tried to influence us by threatening to return to the world. In vain: for we had resolved on breaking up the institution for the present. Had we not done it, we should have caused the good Sisters still more difficulties than they already had to contend with. By and by the penitents submitted, but not without protesting that they would prefer death to leaving us. Some of them, whose constancy was to be relied upon, were placed as servants with respectable families, or provided for in some other way; the rest, between twenty and thirty, were transferred to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd on the appointed day.

11. "On the evening of the 20th of November, and early in the morning of the following day, I gave a short instruction to the penitents, exhorted them to perseverance, requested them to go willingly, if not cheerfully, and thus to give us the best proof of their obedience and affection. I reminded them of the great graces by which the Lord would reward their sacrifice and make it easier for them, and of the love of the Good Shepherd, Who had shed all His blood for them, and had lovingly sought out and saved them. In return for this they must willingly and resolutely make the sacrifice demanded of them.

"My words were listened to amid profuse tears and sobs. In the morning, between five and six o'clock, a procession, the like of which had never been witnessed in Aix la Chapelle, proceeded, reciting the rosary, on a circuitous, more retired route, from St. James' gate to the House of the

Good Shepherd. Mother Frances and a few Sisters went at the head, the penitents followed two and two, Sister Joanna and a companion brought up the rear. We casually met the workmen of a large factory, and a few other people. They uncovered their heads and viewed the strange procession with astonishment, and as some of them later confessed, with emotion. On our arrival, Curate Müngersdorf said Mass, at which we all assisted. After Mass we had to take leave of our penitents. Weeping, they shook hands with us and thanked us. It was a trying scene; the hearts of both parties bled. After the penitents had retired, good Mother Euphrasia invited us to breakfast, but I could take nothing. Silent and weeping I returned to our now desolate home.

12. "I locked myself in my cell, fell into a chair and freely gave vent to my tears. Despite my full resignation to the will of God, I nevertheless permitted myself to complain to Our Dear Lord for taking my poor children away from me, who had been so dear to me for the very reason that they were *His* children, and for whom I would have gladly continued to provide. Amid my tears and lamentations I felt a strange impulse of love for the Lord. Suddenly I heard in my soul a voice saying to me: "Be of good cheer! I shall give thee other penitents." This address immediately brought on a wonderful change in my mind. All my grief vanished, and my soul was filled with consolation and light. At that moment the plan of our recluses was as it were visibly revealed to my mind, and I understood that *they* were to be the penitents of the Lord. Falling on my knees, I

thanked Our Lord with all my heart. With a cheerful countenance, and filled with a certain unction, I returned to the Sisters, to console them in their loneliness. But I said not a word of what had happened, nor did I mention the plan already taking shape in my mind."

13. The events related in this chapter, mostly in the words of Mother Frances, give a luminous insight into her soul, her tender heart, her bent of mind trained by grace, and into the gain she made by this sacrifice. Moreover, they are proof of the supernatural origin of the recluses, an institution criticised by some. They are, finally, instructive to all who intend to devote themselves to the service of God. The more satisfaction and consolation a person finds in the efficacy of his work, the easier his heart cleaves to this, after all, transitory good, and this is an obstacle to perfect purity of intention. It is difficult for the poor human heart to free itself from all inclinations, in order to follow Our Saviour despoiled of everything, to die to self and to live for God alone, as the "Imitation of Christ," (Book III., ch. 37.) says: "Son, leave thyself, and thou shalt find me." To such a height God leads the soul usually only by renewed sacrifice. For, "unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John XII. 24.) Hence the exalted rule of perfection: "Stand without choice, and thou shalt always gain. For greater grace shall always be added to thee, when thou hast perfectly given up thyself, without resuming thyself again." (Imit. of Christ. III. 37.)

CHAPTER IV.

Removal of the Sisters. — Beginning of a contemplative division, or the Recluses. — Election of another Superioress. — Care of Cholera Patients.

1. About that time the community numbered thirteen members, who felt very lonesome after the removal of the penitents. Other trials were not wanting. The three years for which the widow Beissel had paid the rent, were over, and that lady had meanwhile joined the Congregation of the Divine Infant. She had repeatedly applied for admission into the community of Mother Frances, but had been refused, because the conscientious Superioress believed her reception not to be in accordance with the will of God, and that it might injure conventual discipline, as the elderly lady, not able to stand the austere life of the community, in all probability would require exceptions and various other considerations. Though highly prizing her great liberality and her virtues, and accustomed to gratefully acknowledge every service rendered her, and therefore ill at ease at having to refuse her admission, she nevertheless adhered to her decision. "Our benefactress," relates Mother Frances, "naturally felt distressed thereat. Later, she joined the Congregation of the Divine Infant, which was in every way suited to her circumstances. Of course, we thereby lost her assistance for the future, and as a result our means were greatly reduced. But it had to happen thus, and did not cause me any trouble or uneasiness."

Trusting to Providence, she rented the house for three months longer, though entirely destitute of means. Shortly before, her expectations of a rich inheritance had come to nought.

2. Her sponsor, the aged Canon Deboeur, who had so often and before so many witnesses declared Mother Frances his sole heiress, died. After his death no will was found, although no one that knew the circumstances doubted that one had been made. The deceased priest's only sister, a very aged lady, most wealthy and very devoted to Mother Frances, congratulated the latter immediately on her brother's death on her inheritance, declaring she bade her welcome with all her heart to her brother's entire property. Also, when Mother Frances, a few days before the aged priest's death, visited him, he called her to his bedside and made an allusion to the expected heritage; at least she and an Alexian Brother who was present so interpreted his words. When it was finally found that there was nothing for her, true enough it was a surprise; but she made no complaints, considering it rather a divine dispensation. In a spirit of pleasantry she said, a certain person in a brown garb was to blame for her disinheritance. She then explained to those present, who were at a loss to understand these words, that they had reference to her holy Father, St. Francis, the grand despiser of temporal goods. "Even to this day," she writes, "I thank our dear Father St. Francis for having treated us thus; for by that very means we were shown the right direction."

3. God rewarded her disinterestedness and re-

liance on Providence in a manner quite unforeseen, by providing gratuitously a dwelling better suited for the Sisters. At that time the cholera was prevalent in many cities and towns of the country. Even the neighborhood of Aix la Chapelle, which had been a great sufferer from the malady ten years before, was threatened. The city authorities made haste to meet the danger in a proper manner. First of all they resolved to open a cholera infirmary in the old Dominican building, the property of the city. The Rev. Director Fey, a good friend of Mother Frances, notified her of this, and she at once declared her willingness to take charge of the cholera patients. The Sisters, too, were as desirous as herself to devote themselves to this dangerous service. Mother Frances and Sister Mary immediately went to inform the city authorities of their offer, under the sole condition that the Sisters would be allowed to take up their abode in the building destined for the infirmary. The magistrate, who well knew that the two Sisters belonged to the first families of the city, could not conceal his surprise, and declared himself willing to bring up the matter before the city council. After a few days the latter accepted the Sisters' proposal, and made due acknowledgment of the magnanimous offer in a letter authorizing them to take up their abode in the building. With great gratitude towards God, as well for the dwelling granted them, as also for the prospect of "a rich harvest for their holy vocation," as Mother Frances expresses herself, the Sisters left their former home in the first week of January, 1849, even before the expiration

of the three months for which they had re-leased it, and removed to the scantily furnished dwelling "at the Preachers," as the building was usually called. The cholera appearing this time only in a mild form, the intended infirmary was not opened there. Those attacked by the malady were brought to the general hospitals. The Sisters also nursed many victims of the scourge in their homes in the city and in the neighboring Burtscheid. Meanwhile, Aix la Chapelle was visited by another dreadful epidemic, small-pox. Its victims, men, women and children, were brought to the intended cholera infirmary, where the Sisters ministered to them till 1850. In this nauseating and toilsome service Mother Frances was foremost, inciting all the Sisters by her example. It is remarkable that not one of them was attacked by this very contagious disease, although they nursed hundreds of patients, day and night, and were often quite exhausted by their laborious duties.

4. This devotion of the Sisters was duly recognized. The parishioners of St. Paul's church were rejoiced at having Mother Frances amongst them again, and helped her to furnish her poor dwelling. The aged parish priest, Rev. Father Wisdorf, who had been a Capuchin before the suppression of the Orders, was very charitable towards them. He had a part of the choir gallery partitioned off for them, so that they might assist unmolested at divine service.

In 1849, the little community was increased by the admission of nine new members. Amongst them was Paulina, the only surviving sister of

Mother Frances, who entered in May, and, received the name of Paula. We shall have occasion to refer to her later.

5. Mother Frances now deemed it opportune to realize, on a small scale, the thought with which, according to her own conviction, God had inspired her, that is, to add to the Sisters devoted to active life a small class of purely contemplative ones. She writes: "Since the word of the Lord, promising me new penitents, had penetrated to my inner ear, I had this plan continually at heart. I proposed it to the Sisters, though not telling them how it originated and why I was so desirous of its execution. The good God so disposed, that the Sisters joyously assented."

As related above, Mother Frances had collected in Holland also for the purpose of assisting a girl desirous of joining the Trappistines. But it had become evident that her constitution was too weak for that Order. "Therefore," continues Mother Frances, "I resolved to make the trial of the new class with her. While only Sisters who had devoted themselves for some time to active life amongst us can, as a rule, pass over to this class, an exception was made in favor of the first one, Catharine Lindauer, from Heidelberg, who was admitted in February, 1849, receiving the name of Magdalen. The money collected for her was used for the new institution. This mode of life, begun on quite a small scale, occasioned many difficulties at first, and made many changes necessary; but at the same time it proved a blessing to this hour from the beginning."

6. In the summer of the same year, Mother Frances succeeded in obtaining the election of a Superioress to take her place. She relates the affair as follows: "After this new class had been organized, I earnestly thought of resigning my office of Superioress. The desire of placing myself under the security and merit of obedience had of late become so strong in me, that I could resist it no longer. Therefore I declared to the Sisters, that it was in accordance with the spirit of St. Francis to have an election of officers every three years, and that it was a rule to be duly observed. There could be no thought of re-electing me, for I would insist on the observance of the letter of this rule. Sister Gertrude reminded the Sisters that the rule referred to did not apply in my case, because God Himself had elected me for the office. Very positively I commanded her to keep silence, and forbade the Sisters to pay any attention to what she had said. When we proceeded to casting our votes, the Sisters loudly protested, saying: 'If we are not permitted to elect you, we are compelled to give our votes to Sister Mary.' Sister Gertrude remarked, that if she were not allowed to vote for me, she would refrain altogether from voting, which she really did. Receiving all the votes cast, Sister Mary was declared elected. She implored me to spare her; but I remained firm, and announced to the community, that we all must acknowledge her as our Superioress, submitting to her in holy obedience, and honoring her as the representative of God. Sorrowfully Sister Mary accepted the cross of office. She deputed some of her duties to

me, especially the instruction of the Sisters, and the chapter of faults. In holy obedience I fulfilled these duties to the best of my ability. I now felt greatly relieved, and was quite happy to be delivered from the great responsibility. To observe obedience was, in general, sweet to me."

7. We offer a few remarks on this election. Unquestionably the motives that induced Mother Frances to use every effort to secure the merit of obedience instead of the empty honor and great responsibility attached to the rank of Superioress were the most noble, and from a mere human point of view we are inclined rather to admire than to censure her. In fact, however, this election was contrary to the will of God, as was soon demonstrated, and as she herself later sorrowfully acknowledged; and after all that happened we must agree with Sister Gertrude and say, that the other Sisters, unacquainted with the true sense of the prescription of the rule, were induced to give their votes by a sort of coercion. Had Mother Frances given them time to consult with persons well instructed, they would have learned that those ordinances by no means thus strictly prohibit a re-election after a three years' term of office, and that in this case they were not applicable at all, because as yet the community was only a pious association depending on the good will of its members, without ecclesiastical approbation and without statutes and vows. Therefore the elective franchise of the Sisters was free from every restriction by ecclesiastical or civil laws. We do not doubt that personally Mother Frances was con-

vinced of the correctness of her proceeding when she induced the Sisters to give their suffrages against their own judgment and inclination; but for the reasons mentioned, and by evil consequences soon resulting, we see that she permitted her repugnance to the office of Superioress, which adhered to her till death, to influence her in an undue manner and to lead her astray. As we shall see in the following chapter, the satisfaction she experienced was to be of short duration. Soon she was involved in internal and external difficulties by her new position.

8. In Burtscheid, the cholera was still raging. As there was no hospital for the sick poor in the village, the parish priest of St. Michael's, Rev. William Sartorius, established an infirmary and called on Mother Frances for Sisters to nurse the patients. Sisters Paula and Clara were given charge of this infirmary.

9. About this time the Sisters received a call from the archdiocesan authorities to minister to the sick Catholics in the Protestant hospital at Lennep. The female patients there were in the care of a deaconess, and the male ones in charge of a deacon. Some of the Catholic patients had died without the sacraments; wherefore the Catholic pastor, Rev. Mr. Brüll, had requested the spiritual authorities to send Catholic nurses. As the other Catholic sisterhoods had no members at their disposal for the purpose, Rev. Dr. Trost, capitular of the cathedral and a native of Aix la Chapelle, had suggested the community of Mother Frances. This call was the first official recognition

of the new community by the archdiocesan authorities, and was therefore most cheerfully responded to. Mother Frances, together with the then Superioress, Sister Mary, offered themselves for the work at once, and proceeded together to Lennep. Next day Sister Mary returned, and Mother Frances stood alone facing not a few serious difficulties. The Catholic pastor succeeded only after repeated efforts and importunities in gaining her access to the sick. Finally, she was placed in charge of the women dangerously sick, whilst the convalescent ones remained in care of the deaconess, and the men continued to be attended by the deacon. The latter soon was on good terms with Mother Frances, and gladly permitted her to visit the patients in his department. At first, filled with the prejudices against Catholics usual with Protestants, they were rather insolent towards the Catholic nurse; a few even went so far as to use bad language, to curse and to blaspheme. But they were soon silenced. The little nurse stood in their midst in all the power of her courage, and declared that she was ready to suffer every personal affront, but never would she permit God to be offended in her presence; she had come of her own free will, ready for every sacrifice to alleviate their sufferings; but she also expected and demanded that the patients, on their part, would behave themselves in a civil and Christian manner. She would denounce every breach of good manners to the authorities, to have the offenders punished as they deserved. This speech had its effect. Still more did her immense charity, affability, and the skill with which she

nursed them day and night, win their respect and affection. Her ministrations implied severe manual labor, in which there was no one to assist her. Her ward being in the upper story, she had to carry even the water for the frequent baths ordered by the physician. From this we can conclude how fatiguing the service was. In return, she captured all hearts. The former aversion to her was changed into affection, the contempt into admiration. The patients became obedient and docile like children. Some of them could not but tell her that they discerned in her something extraordinary which they were unable to explain; they felt interiorly compelled to submit to her in all things. She then would sometimes reply: "It is the Catholic in me; it is the Catholic faith which you admire."

10. These records of the Annals are fitly supplemented by the notes of Mother Frances in her memorandum-book, which, though they relate but little of her employments at that time, nevertheless give us an insight into her sentiments and state of mind. "It was a blessed, a happy time, that at Lennep. There were difficulties and troubles enough, in truth; but I was strong and able easily to bear the fatigue. In order to give a supernatural direction to my actions, I had to suppress the great natural delight which I feel in ministering to the sick. In every patient I saw my dear Saviour. This mental vision overpowered me, and caused me to nurse them with tender charity. Hence the patients soon became aware of the difference between Catholic and Protestant nursing, and they

were disabused of the strong prejudices with which they at first regarded their Catholic nurse, as soon as the spirit of our holy faith shone luminously and warmingly on them. I remained there about four weeks, a period of life to which I shall always look back with pleasure. Not as if mistakes and hastiness, in which I offend continually, alas, to this hour, had been wanting on my part; but the merciful Redeemer made up for those deficiencies, and all resulted well. Eternal thanks to God for His goodness!

11. "After my return from Lennep I experienced a great desire of earnestly working at my own perfection. I felt that I had as yet not begun, and that it was high time to make a beginning. Until then I had no regular spiritual direction; only when necessity demanded it I had asked for spiritual counsel. Indeed, I must confess that I sought to avoid as much as possible everything that erroneously seemed to me a circumscription of my efforts. Well do I now discern that this was a great imperfection and a serious error. The real reason and ultimate cause of this was the fear occasioned by my weakness of permitting myself to be influenced by human respect and temporal considerations to resist the will of God as I discerned it. And as I also knew nothing by experience of the advantages of a good and true direction, and of the communication of serious affairs to the person ordained by God, I preferred to keep everything to myself. On the whole and after all, it may have been well thus, because in common affairs I was ruled by a certain sentiment and impulse of grace,

rather than by so clear a discernment as to enable me to give definite reasons for my proceedings. Withal, divine mercy, knowing how to produce good even from our faults and infirmities, aided me, suffering, perhaps, a smaller evil to avoid greater harm. I am the more inclined to believe this, because up to that time I had abused many a grace, and yet good had resulted from evil."

To this she adds the humiliating confession that in some things, and also in resigning her office, she at that time unknowingly, as she says, being blinded, did not seek God alone, but herself also, and that even her desire for greater perfection had not remained free from self-love. Therefore God permitted her to be "deceived and blinded."

12. This humble self-accusation of temporary deception, however, must not be accepted in too literal a sense. Of course, it is but too true that even in very good Christians, fine but strong roots of self-love remain in the profound depths of the heart, and prove an obstacle to perfect communion with God. Only a special illumination by the Holy Ghost can discover to man the profound abysses of the soul; and even with the saints this is usually done slowly and gradually. Moreover, it is of no rare occurrence with souls favored early and highly, that God permits them to fall for a time into venial faults or errors, and that they, in a manner, divide their heart between God and a noble natural inclination, without themselves discovering these defects. Later, when they are enlightened by God, they draw from this evil the great gain for their future life, to walk before the

Lord with greater circumspection, and to bewail with a contrite and humbled heart those days of less fervor as a time of ungrateful faithlessness.

13. In general, there is in spiritual life no exaltation without a foregoing or following humiliation, no gracious ascent to God, without a descent into the abyss of our own misery. For in the discovered and acknowledged infirmity of man becomes manifest the divine power of grace, as St. Paul, confessing his weakness, was assured by God Himself: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." (II. Cor. XII. 9.) He then adds, as his own experience: "When I am weak, then I am powerful." (Ibid. 10.) The beautiful words of the saintly bishop Wittmann on Our Saviour crowned with thorns and reviled, explain this sentiment: "The sceptre of Christ is a reed. The reed bends and suffers. The storm breaks the cedars, roots up trees — the reed bows before it. The floods take away houses — the reed bends to the waves and rises again. The scorching heat of the sun dries up the leaves and grass, the reed stands and withers not. The enemy advances, his hosts stamp out fields and meadows — the reed grows in the moor, and remains."

CHAPTER V.

Mother Frances reassumes the direction of the Community. — Bishop Laurent. — Death of Sister Gertrude. — Development of the Sisters' Work.

1. Sister Mary, the newly elected Superioress, who had always been in delicate health before, was

remarkably well during the three years of her convent life, despite the austerities she practised. From the moment of her election, she was almost always ill. She did not deny that her suffering bodily condition had its origin principally in the spiritual oppression which her position caused her. Mother Frances had to attend to all affairs of the community, and did it in entire dependence on the Superioress, without whose order or permission she undertook nothing. A very important matter was now to be attended to, which caused her many trials and troubles — the compilation of the Constitutions of the future Congregation, which were to be submitted to the spiritual Superiors in order to obtain the first ecclesiastical approbation.

2. It was Bishop John Theodore Laurent, who advised the Sisters of the necessity of this step. Bishop Laurent was a native of Aix la Chapelle, born July 6th, 1804. A priest of brilliant talents, he became a renowned champion of the Church. Consecrated titular bishop of Chersonesus, he was appointed, first, Vicar Apostolic of Hamburg; but on account of the violent opposition of the Protestant government he was not permitted to exercise, or even to enter upon his office. On the 1st of December, 1841, he was nominated Vicar Apostolic of Luxemburg, where he effectually renewed, with great spiritual gain, the dormant Catholic spirit, but suffered greatly by the opposition of the Masonic party then dominant in that country. Finally, on the 1st of May, 1848, he was banished. He retired to Aix la Chapelle, where he was held in veneration by all the good, and was ever ready to place his

extraordinary talents, counsel and influence at the service of the Church. He died on the 20th of February, 1884.

3. The acquaintance of Mother Frances with this apostolic man began in 1850. After he had convinced her of the necessity of drawing up Constitutions, she informed him of her motives in founding the community, and related to him the manifestations made to Sister Gertrude Frank in relation to, and her requests concerning it, and submitted to his inspection the memorandum written in July, 1845, as also the one of October 3d. As a consequence, he desired that Sister Gertrude should give him a written statement of her so-called supernatural manifestations, which was done. Unfortunately, this document was lost, but the bishop refers to it in a letter written at Loretto, Italy, July 9th, 1883, to Sister Paula Nellessen, where he says: "By it I was convinced that this devout and prayerful soul had really received a divine inspiration concerning the foundation of the community." And at the close of the letter he says: "The wide propagation and blessed ministrations of your dear community place its divine origin beyond doubt, and ensure its continuance. It is a splendid illustration of the inexhaustible fertility of our holy Mother, the Church, and a great consolation amid the sufferings and trials of our godless age."

4. When the prelate was informed in what manner Mother Frances had resigned her office, he reproved her severely and maintained that she had no right to act thus. Mother Frances writes: "He

urged me to resume the office, saying I had acted contrary to the will of God, and that he held me responsible for all mistakes that might result. But I resolutely declined to follow his advice, and thereby greatly vexed him." Finally, however, two considerations induced her to submit: first, the increasing illness of Sister Mary, and secondly, the turn which the drawing up of the Constitutions threatened to take. She was quite clear as to the principles which ought to govern the community, or, as she expresses herself, "the matter was so firmly fixed in our mind, that we would have given our life-blood for it." The point at issue which caused contradiction and opposition was, in what manner poverty should be observed in the community. The then Superioress, Sister Mary, had not the light and strength to withstand the pressure brought to bear on her by eminent outside influence concerning this point. With great reserve Mother Frances remarks: "One day, when informed that imminent danger of being diverted from the right course threatened the community, I was greatly alarmed. The party at work meant well enough, but the influence exercised was harmful. Sister Mary, excellent soul that she was, permitted herself to be persuaded through ignorance — no, let me call it by the right name — by want of guidance from above in an office which had not come to her from there. At one time there was danger that all achieved hitherto amid such difficulties would be voluntarily sacrificed. To me it seemed the exchange of the right of primogeniture for a mess of pottage. If I had hitherto been blind, and, as I

had been called, stubborn, this thunderbolt crushed me, and opened my eyes. At a glance, I perceived that I had acted wrongly in wilfully throwing off my shoulders the cross imposed upon them by the Lord. With this knowledge there came to me the firm resolution of doing all in my power to repair the mischief I had caused, and to undo the wrong I had been guilty of. I hastened to my cell, fell on my knees, and with all my heart asked pardon of God for having opposed His will. Then I implored Him to come to our aid, and declared myself willing to make any reparation in my power, and to recoil from nothing. Scarcely had I bowed my head to the Lord in this matter, and offered myself to carry the cross, when my soul was flooded with a most confiding trustfulness in the help of God, and a profound peace. This was in the evening. Next morning I acquainted Bishop Laurent with my resolution. He expressed his satisfaction at my conversion, as he called it, but imposed a severe penance on me. He commanded me to reassume, without any further delay, the direction of the community affairs and of the Sisters, without asking permission of Sister Mary, our Superioress, concerning matters. "And then," he added, "at an opportune time, but soon, tell her that you did wrong in forcing the office on her, because it was done in opposition to the holy will of God; and that you now intend to repair your fault, and relieve her of the office." And in a higher pitch of voice he continued: 'If you do not do this, you will cause Sister Mary's death.' "

5. This severe penance, corresponding to the

energetic character of Bishop Laurent, placed Mother Frances in a most painful position. It is not to be wondered at that she hesitated to acquaint Sister Mary with her deposition, but sought to follow a middle course, which, after all, only increased the difficulty. We cite her own words: 'During the last days good Sister Mary had become so ill that the physician began to fear for her life. But her strong mind bore corporal suffering without being mentally affected. I now acted on the bishop's first command, and directed matters independently, without asking permission; but had not the courage to fulfil the second one, for fear of distressing the good Sister in her weak state. But in this I was entirely mistaken. In order to acquit myself of the obligation so strictly imposed, and to avoid the confession so painful to me, I told Sister Mary I would no longer trouble her with questions and proposals, but would assume the care of everything. It seemed to me that she took this independent proceeding somewhat amiss. My plan to facilitate matters in this manner miscarried; God desired that they should be arranged differently. Sister Mary was too conscientious to feel relieved at my proposal; and withal, not understanding its purpose, she could not approve of it. Her illness continued to increase, and the physician was of the opinion that, at best, she would live about a week. In great distress I returned to the bishop after some days. He immediately inquired whether I had spoken to Sister Mary. I affirmed this, and added, that I had told her that I would take care of everything. He asked further, whether I had

told her that she was no longer Superioress of the community, and that I was to take her place. I was obliged to reply in the negative. A shower of reproaches overwhelmed me, and convinced me that I had fulfilled my duty scarcely in part, vainly hoping to gain my end by half measures. I took new courage, and resolved firmly to do as I was commanded. On the very same day I went to our dear, ill, almost dying Superioress, and taking her hand in both of mine, kneeling, with bowed head and streaming tears, I made my confession. Then I added: 'And, dear Mother, you shall die if I do not obey, and then, besides my grievous fault, I shall be responsible for your death.' Sister Mary was deeply affected. She disengaged the hand which I held, and embraced me, saying, with an angelic expression of countenance: 'Oh, how you have relieved me! How I thank our good God! Now all is well. Yes, I feel it, now I can live again. The cross, unfitted to my shoulders, threatened to crush me.' We mutually asked pardon for the sorrow we had unintentionally caused each other. Our relations henceforth became closer than ever."

Sister Mary's health improved wonderfully, and soon she was able to resume her work. The joy of the Sisters on seeing Frances, whom they revered as their true Mother, at their head again, is indescribable. — These occurences happened before Easter, 1850.

6. Sister Gertrude Frank, the first associate of Mother Frances, whose connection with the foundation of the community was related in a previous chapter, was the first also to be removed from it by

a happy death. It occured on the 7th of April, 1850. She had suffered greatly from a cough and an affection of the chest during winter, but still continued to attend to her duties. To recruit her health, she desired to return for a while to her parents at Laurenceberg, near Aix la Chapelle, and took leave of the Sisters, promising to return in a few weeks. But her condition rapidly grew worse, and in three weeks she died. Thus her prediction, mentioned in Book I., chapter 12, that she would not live to see the community approved and to receive the habit, but would die at the age of thirty-three, was fulfilled. In later years she never mentioned the favors she had received; but lived quite simply and humbly. Only once she made a remark that might be construed as a prediction. When the question of the future habit was discussed and several patterns had their advocates, she said, pointing to the one that was really adopted later: "This will be our religious habit." Else she was silent and retired, only saying on one occasion. "My task is accomplished; I know nothing more." She no longer spoke of inspirations, simply living in obedience. This is a further proof of the genuineness of her former communications; for those that once have attained success by fraud or deception through so-called revelations, cannot give up the satisfaction of making new attempts in the same direction.

7. With the number of the Sisters, increased also the extent of their ministrations in the service of the poor and sick, and finally the home nursing and the charity kitchens in all the parishes of the

city were entrusted to them: thus in St. Peter's, in May, 1850; in St. Michael's, in Lent, 1851. This occupation brought them more and more in contact with the lower classes, of whose true condition the wealthy and high-born seldom have more than a superficial knowledge. The more the new community identified itself, as it were, with the needs of the poor, the more it became apparent what an extensive but neglected field lay before the Sisters, and that the affectionate charity which they displayed was the true means of winning even hardened hearts, and souls steeped in vice and sin, of snatching them from eternal ruin, and of leading them to a better life. As early as 1840, God had directed Mother Frances to this field, which she cultivated to her own spiritual satisfaction with the most happy results, and when, in 1850, no other religious community had taken it up, this humble but blessed work seemed to have been reserved by Providence especially for her Sisterhood.

8. Besides nursing the poor in their homes during illness, and relieving their wants generally, the Sisters about this time were engaged in two new works of charity. In their present dwelling, in the old Dominican convent, they established a hospital for incurables, especially those suffering from cancer, who, at that time, were not admitted to the city hospitals. In another division of the same building Mother Frances resumed her work for the reformation of fallen women, which she had given up on the arrival of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She now received such persons of this class as would not enter, or could not be

admitted to the House of the Good Shepherd. The number of persons of this class increased in the course of time, and to this day the Sisters continue their blessed ministrations for them in Aix la Chapelle.

9. The world may be likened to a great infirmary filled with patients suffering from all kinds of bodily ailments; and moreover, it is full of souls infected with the leprosy of sin who are unhappy in this world, and in danger of being eternally unhappy in the next. Even the most wicked and depraved person will not deny that there is something grand and noble in sacrificing one's life to the alleviation of so many and such immense evils. To heal wounds is greater than to cause them; to nurse a loathsome sick person in charity is infinitely above the well-paid art of pleasing, on the stage, the eye and ear of the wealthy.

10. But even these works of charity, if they are but external actions, are not valuable enough in the sight of God to gain us the heavenly crown; they are not "full" (Apoc. III. 2.) before God. The soul must be first ennobled in order that she may bring forth fruits of life, or, as St. Bonaventure remarks, God first makes the person pleasing in His sight, and then his works. God's works are "full," if crowned by interior virtue, elevated by the state of grace, and consecrated by charity. Everything not bearing the seal of God's love is still-born. This is the doctrine of St. Paul, teaching that without charity the speaking of the tongues of angels and men is but the tinkling of cymbals; that all science, and even faith removing mountains,

is nothing without charity; that the heroic sacrifice of one's property and person is nothing without it. Therefore, severe examination of the heart is necessary. "That seems often to be charity, which is rather natural affection; because our own natural inclination, self-will, hope of reward, desire of our own interest, will seldom be wanting." — "And many seek themselves in what they do, and do not know it." (Imit. of Christ, I. 15, 2.; 14, 2.)

CHAPTER VI.

Sketch of the first Constitutions. — Severe Trials. — Archiepiscopal Approbation of the Community. — The first Conferring of the religious Habit.

1. It was already mentioned that Bishop Laurent, in 1850, urged the community to compile Constitutions. He, and the then Superioress, Sister Mary, desired Mother Frances to draw up the fundamental principles and notes, to be submitted to the bishop, who had offered to form them into a code of rules. In a letter to him written on the eve of Pentecost, 1850, she says:

"At this time of Pentecost I feel impelled to transmit to your Lordship an exact copy of what Sister Gertrude bade me write. Later, I will explain matters more fully. There is something so mysterious about the present state of our affairs, that I deem it necessary to inform you thereof, for which God will give time and opportunity. Having obtained the Mother's general permission to do everything necessary for the success of our under-

taking, it seems to me that I should inform you of it. I hope I shall soon be able to inform Mother that I have opened my heart and discovered my interior entirely to you.

"The Holy Ghost Who, five years ago, operated so powerfully and gave life to the community, is now about to communicate Himself to us through one of his elect; therefore I am quite unconcerned, cheerful and filled with childlike joy since our affair is in the hands of your Grace, and only ask that you help us to call down on ourselves for the coming feast the Holy Ghost, for Whom pineth with her whole heart your grateful and devoted Sister Frances."

2. The further course of the affair is related in the words of Mother Frances, with explanatory notes from the Annals. She writes:

"I had been requested to collect the necessary material for the compilation of the Constitutions. As such we had hitherto regarded the customs, exercises and daily practices which we observed. The substance of the Constitutions to be compiled was expressed in the following three articles:

a) Profession of perpetual vows after sufficient previous probation.

b) Observance of the poverty of St. Francis, the holding of property, for the purpose of thereby securing a livelihood, being forbidden, not only to individual members, but also to the community at large.

c) Attainment of the ends of the Order: 1) personal sanctity, by faithfully observing the evangelical counsels and sacred vows for love of

Christ; 2) the exercise of works of mercy, as prescribed by the statutes.

"The first and last articles passed Bishop Laurent's scrutiny; he was even enthusiastic for the profession of perpetual vows. But concerning the second article, he found it very difficult to agree with us; he rather earnestly opposed it. Finally, feeling compelled to approve of our plan, he remarked, that in our times it meant to expect miracles of God, for which a great confidence was necessary. I showed him the passage in the life of St. Francis where God promises that He Himself will provide for his sustenance and that of his followers until the end of time if they will but adhere to the spirit and letter of the rule. This mention of the great promise was sufficient with the strong and lively faith of the bishop to fill him with great veneration for such a manner of life. Nevertheless, human prudence sometimes prevailed, and thus by turns appeared esteem for this principle, and rejection of its application or practice in our times.

"This was part of the plan of Providence, and served to fix us more firmly in our purpose; I say, *this* and many other things that were objected to later by the spiritual Superiors, for which I can not sufficiently thank them and the good God, Who thus ordained. For, as in a storm the young trees send their roots deeper into the earth, and thereby become more firmly fixed, thus it also happened to us. The matter was so clear to us, and we so firmly adhered to it, that we were ready to give our life-blood for it. I shall not mention in detail

the many trials we had then to undergo; it would be too diffusive, and might also give occasion to misunderstandings here and there; but I repeat with all my heart, I thank God and all those that occasioned them. For, besides proceeding always from the best of intentions, this opposition confirmed us more and more in the right, and whenever there was danger of leaving the track, we were always brought back to the right path."

3. That the principles of Mother Frances concerning poverty and its practice should find much contradiction was natural, because they deviated from the general practice of other female congregations, and in a measure also from the principles fixed by the Holy See as normal for all the more recent congregations. The opposition, therefore, of the clergymen entrusted with the compilation or examination of the Constitution proceeded not only from the best of intentions, but was founded, as they viewed it, on good and indisputable reasons, being directed against what were considered the unpractical and, in our age, impossible ideas of Mother Frances. She, on the contrary, firmly held to the clearly understood principles infused into her by God, which to give up seemed to her would be a faithless treachery to His cause. Of course her inflexible attitude, which must seem obstinacy to those that did not know her spirit and divine guidance, only increased the intensity of the conflict. Even Bishop Laurent, when drafting the Constitutions, could be induced only after long and animated discussions to yield to her on the question of poverty. In later years he expressed himself

to the writer in terms of the highest esteem for the constancy and the supernatural enlightenment shown in this affair by Mother Frances. He acknowledged that only from her he had learned the value and power of evangelical poverty, after having at first not spared reproach and contradiction, and not rarely caused her tears to flow. "But," he added, "she was right and acted on higher illumination; and though, in her liberality, she was accustomed to be quite unmindful of money, she nevertheless prospered better in her evangelical poverty and confidence in God, than others with all their human aids and prudent administration."

4. In the same year — 1850 — the Constitutions were submitted to the archiepiscopal court in Cologne, with a petition for their approval, and for permission to wear a religious habit. Mother Frances writes:

"Of course objections, contradictions and trials followed. In order to arrive at light and clearness I had to make a great sacrifice; but grace impelled me thereto, despite the unwillingness of nature. After the sacrifice was made and the request had been complied with, the solution of the difficulties was arrived at in an extraordinary manner. For certain reasons I omit particulars; but I thanked God with all my heart, and shall always thank Him for His miraculous intervention." (She does not mention in what the sacrifice consisted.)

5. The Annals contain information showing that the struggles were even more severe and prolonged than the moderate account of Mother Frances would give us to understand. The chief

censor of the Constitutions, Rev. Dr. Trost, capitular of the cathedral, and well disposed towards the Sisters, felt himself bound to pronounce against perpetual vows and against the total exclusion of all capital and real estate. Moreover, the designation "Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis" did not find favor with him, it being disagreeable, even repulsive. The written arguments with him were often supplemented by oral ones, but led to no agreement on account of the difference of opinion, and sometimes they only resulted in increased opposition. Once, when Mother Frances remarked that she would rather retire than sacrifice her principles concerning poverty, she received the reply: "Well, we will let *you* go!" She then declared that she spoke by no means in her own name alone, but in the name of the Sisters, whose views and wishes she represented, and that they were all determined rather to disband and become servants in the hospital, than to sacrifice their principles; for these were the mainstays of the spirit that must animate the new Congregation. The Annals further relate:

"But there was great need of prayer, struggles and sufferings before these principles triumphed. Our trials were innumerable, and can be indicated only in a general way for the purpose of showing what it cost our venerable Mother to establish and maintain the total poverty according to the spirit of St. Francis, so that the Sisters at all times esteem and observe poverty the more conscientiously as their greatest treasure."

According to the same Annals a clergyman, well

disposed towards the community in all other things, had permitted himself to be induced to try to persuade Mother Frances to give up her views on that point, because he had been told by clergymen in Cologne that there was no prospect that the Constitutions, in their present shape, would be approved. She rejoined: "I shall never depart from those principles; and if I should do so, I should have to tear out every hair of my head if God did not punish me with sudden death." She said this so fervently, and with such inflexible determination, that the good priest was quite moved, and not only relinquished his importunities, but promised to use his influence with the ecclesiastical court in her favor.

6. The decision of the Ordinary was delayed beyond the expectation of the Sisters, which was the more annoying, because they had been repeatedly called upon to found branch establishments outside of Aix la Chapelle, especially one at Bonn, which obviously could not be well done before this question was settled. The Rev. Dr. Kloth, their former pastor, and now honorary canon, favored the Sisters, and on one occasion spoke to the bishop of Roermond, Holland, on their condition and the obstacles that prevented the approval of the Constitutions. This prudent and experienced prelate declared himself willing to approve the Constitutions if the Sisters would remove their community to the diocese of Roermond. Mother Frances and the Sisters, misinformed concerning the true dispositions of Cardinal Geissel, the Archbishop, towards them, and having relinquished

all hopes of his approval, were inclined to accept this offer. Rev. Dr. Kloth then informed the Cardinal, that if there was no prospect that the Sisters would receive ecclesiastical confirmation of their mode of life in Cologne, Mother Frances would remove with her community to the diocese of Roermond. The Cardinal replied in an autograph letter that the ladies should have patience, the affair was nearing its settlement. The enlightened prelate had without doubt discerned the spirit of the foundress by means of this severe probation. Later, on occasion of a visit of Mother Frances to him soon after the reception of the habit, he expressed his real sentiments to her concerning the matter. Pointing to the red cross on her scapular, he remarked: "Well, you have fought valiantly for it. True, I did not personally conduct your affair, but I was well acquainted with everything, and I felt convinced that you would come off victorious."

Persons of high standing also exerted themselves in favor of Mother Frances. Among these was foremost Baron von Boeselager in Bonn, who interviewed the Cardinal in the interest of the approbation, in order to be able to found a house for the Sisters in that city.

7. During the octave of Corpus Christi, the the archiepiscopal commissary, Rev. Dean Dilschneider, informed Mother Frances that the Constitutions were approved, and that she might make preparations for the vesting of the Sisters. Somewhat suspicious after all her experiences, Mother Frances desired first to see the Constitutions,

and to assure herself that the conditions which she regarded as indispensable were not erased. When convinced thereof, and informed why the Constitutions had not been returned to her immediately, her own and the Sisters' joy was indescribable. (This happened on the feast of the Sacred Heart.) The reason for the delay in the return of the approved Constitutions was: During the first revision the manuscript had been corrected and changed in many places, wherefore the ecclesiastical commission had ordered a new copy to be prepared for her. The community of Mother Frances was constituted a religious Congregation enjoying the approbation of the Ordinary on the 2d of July, 1851; the Constitutions were confirmed on the 12th of July. Besides the Constitutions a so-called External Statute had been drafted, containing a comprehensive statement of the object, the exterior organization and the work of the Congregation, the latter to consist in ministering to the poor and sick. This statute had been approved as early as May 9th, by the ecclesiastical commission; later September 13th, 1853, it received the sanction of the king of Prussia, William IV., thus obtaining recognition by the state and corporate rights for the Congregation.

8. "It was now resolved," writes Mother Frances, "to take the habit, if possible, on the feast of St. Clare. We desired it very much. Moreover, a branch house had been established over a year ago at Juelich, and the government urged us to take charge of the female prisoners in the city's House of Detention. Shortly before the

vesting we had to undergo another severe trial, but with the help of God we finally triumphed, and joyfully looked forward to the day appointed for the conferring of the habit. This day of grace dawned on the 12th of August, feast of St. Clare: after long expectation we received on it the habit of St. Francis, blessed by the priest, the minister of God."

9. On the morning of this long wished for day Mother Frances and her twenty-three associates*) went in their poor formerly black, now greenish dresses, to St. Paul's, the former Dominican church. Sister Mary, as yet very weak, could assist at the solemnity only in a sitting posture, leaning on the last postulant, Louisa Nellessen, who bore the candle for her. Mentally, she was quite bright, and transfigured by joy. The Sisters took their places in the sanctuary of the church. The commissary, chief Rector Dilschneider, celebrated Mass, assisted by the pastor of St. Paul's, Rev. Mr. Blum, and Canon Dr. Kloth. After the gospel he made a suitable address and proceeded to vest the Sisters. Mother Clara Fey, the Superioress of the Sisters of the Divine Infant, and her Assistant, Sister Teresa Starz, aided in the vesting. On account of the popularity of the Sisters, and because they had a great many relatives, friends and

*) The Annals give their names: Frances Schervier, Catharine Daverkosen, Joanna Bruchhaus, Catharine Lassen, Catharine Klausener, Margaret Hamacher, Sophia Schmitz, Elisabeth Hovestadt, Elisabeth Lemmertz, Elisabeth Eschweiler, Mary Hesse, Catharine Neulen, Catharine Lindauer, Margaret Gruemmer, Wilhelmine Wegmann, Paulina Schervier, Elisabeth Wildt, Joanna Edmonds, Cornelia Prickardts, Anna Heinemann, Elisabeth Schneider, Gertrude Wermann, Magdalen Schiffers and Anna Besener.

recipients of their charity, the assembly was a very large one. All were desirous of seeing their friends in their new religious dress. Mother Frances writes of herself, that it seemed like a dream to her, when she saw herself and her Sisters in the habit. The celebration took up the whole forenoon. The Annals mention, that on account of the great solemnity something happened that had been unheard of during the five years before, viz. that every Sister received an egg at dinner! Meat was not served, although the celebration occurred on Tuesday, on which the rule permits its use. The reason for this abstinence was, besides their great poverty, the expectation, which however was not realized, of having meat at supper, to which the whole community had been invited by the Sisters of the Divine Infant. In the afternoon the newly vested Sisters went to the church of this community, assisted at a solemn service and then enjoyed a few hours of recreation. In the church, Rev. Mr. Fey, formerly curate of St. Paul's, and now director of the Congregation of the Divine Infant, preached a most affecting sermon on the advantages of the religious state. This Congregation venerates St. Dominic as their Father. In remembrance of the sacred friendship uniting St. Dominic and St. Francis, the two Congregations, whose foundresses had been friends for years, on that day formed a still closer union, took supper in the same refectory, and enjoyed a few hours' pious relaxation.

10. The Annals here aptly remark that great as the joy of the Sisters and their pious desire of

sacrificing themselves to their vocation is at present when they receive the holy habit, these sentiments were greatly surpassed by the fervent happiness that filled, on that memorable day, the twenty-four newly vested. The degree of their happiness can only be estimated when compared with the greatness of the sacrifice which the Sisters then had to offer, and which far surpassed every later one.

In general, sacrifices made for God's sake and for a holy cause are not only a source of blessing, but also — and this is realized by few — a source of purest pleasure. This pleasure relates not only to the future eternal reward, but also to the enjoyments of the soul during life. But the inordinate desire of temporal pleasure renders most men so blind, that in deplorable delusion they themselves obstruct the source of spiritual joy, and presumptuously refuse to tread the only path leading to the lost paradise, namely that of supernatural charity that sacrifices things temporal. Human folly, however, cannot efface the truths written by the hand of God: "Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not regard to vanities, and lying follies." (Ps. XXXIX, 5.) And: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." (James I, 12.)

CHAPTER VII.

The Constitutions.

1. Before continuing the history of the events that followed the vesting, let us cast a glance at

the Constitutions whose approval by the Ordinary cost so severe a struggle.

The Constitutions approved by Cardinal Geissel, Archbishop of Cologne, on the 2d of July, 1851, are much shorter than those published in 1865 soon to be mentioned. They consist of twenty-five brief paragraphs, wherein the objects of the Congregation are stated in a few words. In the enlarged Constitutions (chapter 2d,) they are explained more fully. Concerning poverty the following is said: "The Congregation binds itself to possess no property, except a church, convent and the necessaries for the existence of the community. As it works only for and ministers to the poor, therefore it also desires to live with and like them by alms. The postulate, to be made in secular dress, shall be continued for six months. After one year's novitiate the vows are pronounced. The election of the Superioress and of five counselors is for five years."

2. The evolution of the principles contained in this first sketch caused the venerable foundress many struggles and sacrifices, prayers and tears. She often consulted clergymen, and if no principles were at stake which she regarded as the manifest will of God, she readily submitted her judgment to their authority. When the later revision was made she told the writer that, on the authority of others and against her own judgment, she had accepted many points not agreeing with the principles recognized at Rome. She did all in her power to bring this important matter to a happy issue, and could truly say: "Did the Sisters but know the tears and sufferings caused by our Constitutions,

they would not so easily disregard some of their ordinances." The enlarged Constitutions contain many regulations concerning religious life and spiritual exercises that are essentially the same in all the more recent congregations. We append some of them in the form in which they were adopted in 1865. Their approval is worded as follows: "By these presents the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis in Aix la Chapelle are approved of provisionally with the reservation that changes and additions be made if they should be deemed necessary or useful, and they are hereby delivered to the said religious Congregation for their exact observance. — Cologne, September 8th, 1865. — The Administrator: (*Signed*) Baudri."

3. Meanwhile the Congregation had greatly increased and spread into various dioceses, so that it was deemed necessary to obtain the approval of the Holy See for the Constitutions and the Congregation. For this purpose the archiepiscopal court had the Constitutions translated into Latin, making at the same time several changes. In this form they were sent to Rome on the 17th of April, 1870. It is now customary with the Holy See to approve, with a commendatory acknowledgment, new female congregations, at first only provisionally, generally for ten years, for the sake of experiment, after the constitutions have been examined by the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and, usually, to add some remarks on desirable changes. After the lapse of the specified time the constitutions are again examined, and then finally confirmed.

Accordingly, the said Congregation, on the 22nd

of July, 1870, issued a decree in the name of His Holiness, Pius IX., duly praising this Congregation, and mentioning twelve articles in which a change was desired.

4. We add some extracts from the Constitutions published in 1865, which will serve to indicate the spirit of Mother Frances and her community.

The Constitutions are based on the Third Rule of St. Francis for seculars, in the form prescribed by Pope Leo X. in 1521, for Tertiaries living in community. They define this rule more precisely and adapt it to the special object of the Congregation. The latter is under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishops. Besides the sanctification of its members, the object of the Congregation is defined as follows: "The members are to sacrifice their faculties and means entirely to God for their brethren and sisters in the world, by the exercise of all works of Christian charity and mercy for which occasion is offered them and which they have the ability to perform. By this ministry they intend to honor in a special manner the work and labors of the God-man during the three years of His public life."

As their special duty is mentioned in the first place: the service of the sick poor, even of those that suffer through their own fault, or of contagious diseases; to minister to them in their own homes, and also in public institutions. The sick poor have the first claim on their services; only in exceptional cases the care of wealthy, but neglected patients is to be undertaken, but a remuneration is not to be accepted. Nevertheless, the Superiors may receive alms for the relief of the poor.

In the second place is mentioned the ministry amongst the poor. This is to be exercised partly by managing public charity kitchens, partly by visits, furnishing relief, procuring work for them, assisting them in their household duties, etc. Also, where there are no institutions for penitent females, the Congregation shall lend a helping hand to such as desire to reform, and provide a temporary home for them, giving them shelter and employment. Above all, the Sisters shall take care of poor abandoned girls, in order to protect them from dangers, to educate them to a true Christian life and to form them to industrious habits. Finally, if they are called to the care of prisoners and convicts, they shall not refuse.

5. Concerning the vows, the following regulation was adopted later. The vows pronounced immediately after the novitiate should be private, but perpetual. The public profession is to be made only after a period of five years. Then follows: "With this profession the ordinances concerning the vow of poverty come into full force; that is, poverty is vowed with the full relinquishment of every personal right of property according to the sense of St. Francis, and thereby the affiliation to the Congregation is perfected". The regulations concerning poverty deserve special consideration both in its reference to the Congregation as a corporation, as also in its application to the individual Sisters.

From their love of poverty the Sisters are styled "Sisters of the Poor," not only because they are for the poor, but because they themselves are to be poor,

alike in everything unto these. The Congregation is to have and possess nothing beyond the necessaries of life and maintenance. They have obtained civic rights of corporation only for the purpose of acquiring and occupying a convent with church and garden, which is to be the mother-house of the entire Congregation, and, with the propagation of the Order and its division into provinces, for acquiring a house for each province, and, perhaps, another for a novitiate. The branch houses entrusted to them they do not regard as their property, but use them only for the purposes for which they took possession of them. A dowry is not required of those admitted, except a certain sum to defray the expenses of dress and other necessaries. Anything freely offered upon one's admission shall not be set aside to draw interest, and shall moreover not be kept over two years. Only at the second profession shall the Sisters renounce all rights of property, the disposal of which they reserve after the first vows. Before the second, real and perpetual profession they shall dispose, by written document, of whatever they then possess or may acquire in future, in testamentary manner, and this in accordance with the counsel of the gospel: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor;" in the first place, in favor of the poor, or of benevolent institutions, and regarding the institutions of the Sisters as having the first claim. The rules on the practice of poverty in dwelling, nourishment, dress, bed, and on total dependence for the use of things on the permission of the Superiors, are strictly in accord with the spirit of the most austere poverty. This

spirit, that is, interior renunciation of all temporal things, is inculcated above all. "The Sisters shall have nothing of their own in this world, nor shall they desire anything. As long as they are not permitted to renounce proprietary rights entirely, they shall regard them as fetters, which they are as yet condemned to wear for a while, until they shall be permitted to lay them aside. A Sister desiring to possess property is not worthy to be called a daughter of St. Francis."

Finally, the Sisters are exhorted to collect alms willingly. This is to be done in the spirit of St. Francis, in token of their poverty, and for the exercise of humility, but with perfect decorum and due regard for circumstances. Fulfilling the injunction of St. Francis, they shall "consider themselves as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, confidently questing alms, and not ashamed thereat, because Our Lord became poor in this world on our account." Whatsoever they shall receive, they shall place immediately at the disposal of their Superiors.

6. Two of the regulations concerning poverty go beyond the general rules prescribed for nearly all recent female communities, and require some explanation.

First, it is prescribed that the Congregation as a whole shall have no fixed revenue, whether from the proceeds of real estate or from interest on capital. Only a mother-house, and at most an additional house for the novitiate of the Order, is conceded to each province as property of the community.

As is well known, the Council of Trent (Sess. 25.) has allowed all Orders of either sex, with exception of the Observantine Franciscans and their different branches, and of the Capuchins, to own real estate and to have fixed revenues. Nevertheless, some communities of the Poor Clares, especially those of the reform of St. Coleta, adhered to the absolute renunciation of all civil rights to property and fixed income, as it had been ordained by the rule of St. Clare. But the Poor Clares professed *solemn vows*, whereas all the more recent female congregations, according to the ruling of the Holy See, profess only *simple*, though perpetual vows.*)

7. Nevertheless, this rule concerning poverty and the expropriation of the Congregation as such, which had caused such difficulties with the archie-

*) The difference between simple vows (*vota simplicia*), and solemn vows (*vota solemnia*), does not consist in the circumstance that the latter are pronounced publicly before the minister of the Church, and with certain solemnities, or for life, for this is also done in the simple vows of religion. Nor does the difference consist in the extent of the promises made, for this is usually the same in both kinds of vows. The difference can therefore consist only in the manner of obligation entered into, and in the degree of renunciation. The earlier theologians, especially St. Bonaventure (IV. *Sentent.* 38, 2.) and St. Thomas (*Summa* 2, II., 88, 7.) are of the opinion that this difference results not solely from a purely ecclesiastical ordination, but from a higher and intrinsic distinction connected with divine law. But after several declarations of the Holy See the contrary opinion of Richard of Mediavilla and Duns Scotus was generally accepted; namely, that the solemnity of the vows depends solely on the ordination of the Church. The difference between both kinds is best seen in the vow of chastity. With it the *solemn vow* is *always* an invalidating impediment, that is, it causes attempted matrimony to be null and void. The *simple vow*, on the contrary, is only an impediment (except with the Society of Jesus) making the marriage contrat *illicit*, but not invalid. Moreover it is to be remarked, that since the Lateran Council, 1215, the approbation of an Order with solemn vows is reserved to the Holy See. Hence the vows professed in the congregations of these Sisters, though perpetual, were and are not *solemn* but simple vows, and have only the effect, as regards poverty, attributed to them by the Church.

piscopal commission, passed without hesitation at Rome when the first revision of the Constitutions was made. Moreover, the same and even stricter regulations of other female congregations concerning poverty were expressly approved of late by the Holy See, especially by Pope Leo XIII. on the 19th of September, 1888, when he confirmed the Institute of Stigmatines, who also profess only simple vows. This community professes the full poverty of the Franciscan Order mentioned by the Council of Trent, to the exclusion of all civil rights of property.

8. There is, moreover, a special reason for the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis to renounce a fixed income for the purpose of maintenance. Mother Frances considered the aid and care of the poor as one of the principal objects of the Sisters; and as even great capital does not suffice for this purpose, and as on the other hand only the poor are suited to begging alms: therefore the ministrations of the Congregation to the poor had to be founded on the Providence of the Father of the poor, and His inexhaustible treasures and bounty. Experience also has taught that evangelical poverty, in connection with charity, the queen of all virtues, is the surest means of maintaining the work of aiding the poor, and of providing for those devoted to it.

Not only in the beginning of the Congregation, but also after the death of the venerable Foundress, and amid the struggles originating in the "May Laws," did the principles and regulations concerning the prohibition of a fixed income prove to be

correct. This was recognized by the General Chapter of the Sisters on the 8th of March, 1882, when it was unanimously resolved to retain this feature unchanged. Referring to a similar declaration of 1881, by a deceased Superioress, the minutes state that despite the most unfavorable conditions, the prohibition of collections, the increased number of Sisters, and great, unforeseen expenses, etc., former experiences in favor of retaining this regulation had been confirmed by later ones. In America, the results attained were still greater than in Germany, and yet the Sisters arrived there empty-handed, while they now had eleven houses, and hospitals with thousands of sick, whom they generally nursed without remuneration; nevertheless, neither the patients nor the Sisters ever suffered for want of the necessaries. The retention of this practice, sanctioned by the experience of over thirty years, could only have a most salutary influence on the spirit of the Congregation, and on the devotedness of the Sisters to their vocation.

9. Concerning the second regulation, viz: the poverty of the individual Sisters, the text of the rule published in 1865, and the will of the Foundress exceeded in one point the ordinances made for the observance of the more recent Congregations. Mother Frances desired that those Sisters who are admitted to the second vows, should not only renounce the independent use of temporal things and all right of disposal and administration of their property, but also "all personal right of property" as fully as is done by the solemn vow of poverty. In the formula of profession, the words "to live in

poverty until death" were supplemented by the addition, "without any property." Now it is a principle of the Holy See, that in pronouncing the simple vows of religion, the administration and usufruct, and also the independent use of one's property is renounced, but in such a manner, that the *right* of property, or the radical ownership (*dominium radicale*) is reserved. Hence a religious, in case of leaving the Order, can claim the right of ownership before civil and ecclesiastical courts. Thus it was also ordained by the Holy See concerning the Stigmatines, although they adhere in everything else to the full poverty of the Franciscan Order. For this reason the first Roman revision of the Constitutions contains the remark that the inaccurate expressions of the original text should be remodeled in accordance with these principles.

10. Although this point scarcely has any bearing on the practical exercise of poverty in general religious life, Mother Frances was nevertheless greatly troubled whether she should consent to such a relaxation of the full renunciation of temporal things. She was devoted with all her heart to the sublime poverty of St. Francis, and had therefore prescribed in the Constitutions (§ 38) to those Sisters not yet admitted to the second vows, "that, as long as they are not permitted to renounce proprietary rights entirely, they shall regard them as fetters, which they are as yet condemned to wear to their confusion, until they shall be permitted to lay them aside."

Having so great a veneration for and unbounded devotion to the Supreme Head of the Church, she

was affected painfully by this decision; but soon recognizing the difficulty of the matter, and on the other hand fearing with a certain scrupulosity, to sacrifice her ideal of poverty, she could not arrive, despite earnest prayer, at a clear solution of the difficulty. Therefore, and because of the promulgation of the "May Laws," which fell in this time, she thought it best to leave the decision to the future; and as death soon claimed her, this matter, and the final approbation of the Constitutions, is yet in abeyance. She herself advocated till death, that the Sisters should adhere to poverty as it had hitherto been practised in the Congregation.

11. External want, without the interior spirit of poverty, is rather a loss than a gain. Poverty of spirit, however, is not a product of the human mind, but a gift of God. Its *root* is faith, which points out to the eye and heart more precious treasures than those offered by the world, "treasures in heaven, where neither the rust and moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." (Matth. VI. 20.) Its *staff* is heavenly hope, directing our expectations beyond the sky, seeking "first the kingdom of God and His justice," and hoping that "all these things shall be added unto you." (Matth. VI. 33.) Its *soul* and its *crown* is the love of the Crucified, Who, "being rich, He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be rich." (II Cor. VIII. 9.)

CHAPTER VIII.

New Foundations.—Mother Frances discovers and defeats a diabolical deception.

1. Even before the first conferring of the habit, as early as June 13th, 1850, Mother Frances took charge of a poor-house in Juelich. This institution, called the "Inn," or "Hospital of the Holy Ghost," had been attended by Elisabethines until the suppression of religious Orders; then it had been suffered to fall into neglect, until pastor Hennes and the pauper commission called our Sisters. The latter, at the same time, undertook to nurse the sick in their homes. Sister Paula, the sister of Mother Frances, was Superioress of the little community. The young Superioress bravely overcame all difficulties, joyfully underwent all labors and gladly suffered all privations, and soon things were in perfect shape. But her exertions overtaxed her strength. Once, after watching through several nights, she swooned away while assisting at Mass. Regaining consciousness after being carried away, she smilingly observed: "I am not ill; I was only overcome by sleep."

2. After the approval of the Congregation the establishment at Bonn, planned some time before and zealously advocated by Baron Boeselager, was effected. For this and all later foundations Mother Frances demanded, as an essential condition, that the pastors concur; also, that the Sisters be permitted to collect alms and that they should not be responsible to any board or commission concerning the use made of the alms collected, but that they might freely devote them to the use of the institute.

The community in Bonn at first consisted only of three Sisters and a postulant. The young Sister Bonaventure, who labored faithfully in different establishments till her death, May 8th, 1889, was Superioress. The little community at once began nursing the sick in their homes, and soon also established a charity kitchen, for which they begged aid from door to door. In a letter dated October 6th, 1851, Mother Frances exhorts the Superioress to beware of overtaxing herself and the Sisters with too much work, that they might not lose the spirit of recollection. "For," she adds, "your labors would then be unprofitable to yourselves and to your fellow-men." On the 22d of November she writes to Sister Bonaventure informing her that she was confined to her room by a pain in her feet, and remarks: "Well as it is for me to be compelled to escape from the noise and confusion of our daily occupations, it nevertheless appears strange to me not to be with the Sisters. But Our Dear Lord knows for what this is good, and so I leave the care of everything to Him." On January 3d, 1852, she writes: "Oh how sincerely I desire to send you assistance! I can scarcely bide the time until I shall be able to send you a fifth Sister." Then she exhorts the Sisters, who at that time had to go a long way to church early in the morning, to profit by what, in the hard winter, was a great sacrifice. "Always think of Our Saviour carrying His cross, and it will become sweet to you to follow in His footsteps."

3. By request of the royal government, Mother Frances, on the 15th of August, 1851, engaged in a

new, difficult, and in some respects ill-rewarded undertaking, which, however, was most agreeable to God, viz., she took charge of the female prisoners in the House of Detention at Aix la Chapelle. The sad moral condition of such persons is well known. In order to bring about a reformation, the zealous chaplain of the institution, the Rev. Pastor Mettman, had obtained the consent of the magistrate. Sisters Dominica and Jacoba were detailed for the work. At first they remained with the convicts only during day-time; later they took up their abode in the prison. Their labors were signally blessed, and soon other Sisters had to come to their assistance. Many of the convicts reformed. The Sisters took special care to provide for them after their release, the more so because this class of persons generally has difficulty in finding the means of perseverance by obtaining a suitable position. Later, a Sister in the mother-house was appointed and steadily employed in assisting released convicts and finding a home and employment for them.

Another work of charity, which her magnanimity of heart impelled Mother Frances to undertake about this time, shows her love for unfortunates of all kinds in a clear light. One part of the old Dominican monastery had been furnished as a home for aged and invalid poor by the pauper commission. On every great feast of the Church or the Order she visited, with the Sisters, these poor creatures and treated them to coffee and cake, for which purpose she collected among her benefactors.

4. When, in the course of time, the community became better known, alms also came in more abundantly, and the liberality of Mother Frances increased in the same, or rather in a greater degree. Yet, sometimes the means did not equal the growing needs, and as a consequence, the community suffered from want; for Mother Frances was more intent on the needs of the destitute than on the demands of her own household. When the treasury was empty, she did not feel uneasy, but confidently placed her entire trust in Providence. Her confidence increased more and more by experience, and was often rewarded by unmistakable proofs of unexpected help. Thus she had to mail a letter, but lacked the means to prepay the postage. On being called to the parlor, she found a benefactress there who, without being informed of her destitution, gave her one hundred thalers.

5. The danger of deception lying in extraordinary, seemingly supernatural occurrences was shown in a most striking manner by an affair as strange as it proved instructive, which happened in 1852. At the same time it is a proof of the rare judgment and firmness of Mother Frances. The object of this diabolical deception was to remove the saintly Foundress from her office, and thus to destroy, or at least to weaken, the Congregation which had just been confirmed.

In explanation of this strange occurrence we premise, that, according to the doctrine of the Church, supernatural, divine powers and workings of grace operate continually, if withal secretly, fortifying and elevating the soul interiorly, and

sometimes even appearing unmistakably in external life. Faith teaches also that on the other hand the moral life of the soul is influenced by the operation of evil spirits, and that often enough it is drawn away from God into the depth of consummate degradation. This diabolical influence sometimes appears manifestly, and increases to demoniac possession, as Holy Scripture and the experience of all nations through centuries prove.

In relating the establishment of the new community we had occasion to mention the often-repeated extraordinary influence of God, the reality of which can not be reasonably doubted. A diabolical counterpart, designed for the ruin of this divine plantation, need not surprise us. We may remark in the life of all the saints, that in the same degree as they were elevated above the common ways and virtues of Christian life, by extraordinary gifts of grace, they were also exposed to strange diabolical vexations, which they could overcome only by the grace of God, and with much patience.

6. In the case to which we refer, hell used as its instrument a young girl of Aix la Chapelle, whom Mother Frances had snatched from the clutches of vice. As she promised to reform and do penance, she placed her in one of the branch houses. The incident being of a rather recent date, we confine ourselves to the narration of the main facts, without going into details.

In the branch house alluded to, this person was soon affected with morbid manifestations similar to those observed in somnambulists. Medical aid proved of no avail, and the apparently ecstatic

indications became more and more frequent. Every co-operation from the outside being excluded, the theory of intentional simulation was scarcely admissible. Sister Mary, the Superioress of the house, an excellent religious, at first paid no attention to the person's strange words and actions, but treated her rather severely. But the confessor, a good priest, but withal young and inexperienced in this respect, judged her differently. The appearances were abnormal indeed. The Sisters saw her remaining immovable in ecstacy for hours, and even thought they observed her suspended in the air. As the confessor did not doubt the person's good disposition, and as some other young priests, amongst them the excellent and very sober-minded brother of Mother Frances, had been converted to his opinion, Sister Mary became a more ardent supporter of the impostor from day to day. But Mother Frances considered the whole affair a deception and diabolical fraud. Acting on the advice of her confessor, she once came to witness one of the pretended ecstacies. The patient was brought to the chapel, and placed before the altar; all at once her hair stood on end and surrounded her head like a wreath; her body was enshrouded by the semblance of a halo. The whole performance made a repulsive impression on Mother Frances. Nevertheless, she thought it prudent not to interfere immediately, as her view was not shared by the others, and she hoped further developments would open their eyes. But though there soon came clear indications of a diabolical fraud, her hope was not realized.

One day, when Sister Mary, who had been sitting at the patient's bed-side, was about to leave her to give an instruction to the Sisters, she detained her, saying: "Call the Sisters here; I will instruct them." This was done. She spoke for an hour on the great dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, dwelling also on her love for the new congregation, and assuring them that it was the Mother of God that spoke through her. The good Sisters were greatly edified, although at times a different voice would speak, contradicting, and affirming falsehoods. This, the patient said, was the devil. The first conference was followed by others, in which the impostor, perhaps herself imposed upon, insisted that the Blessed Virgin had so great a love for the community, that she herself would deign to be its Superioress, and use her, a poor sinner, as her instrument. Then she demanded to be received into the community, and never to be separated from Sister Mary. They would both be the instruments of their heavenly Superioress in the direction of the community. Mother Frances must resign her office.

These more than suspicious declarations were repeatedly mixed with obscene or ambiguous words, attributed by her confessor to the influence of the devil seeking to counteract the operations of grace. A prediction made by her, that on a certain day she would receive the stigmata, or five wounds, did not come true, though she had made every preparation for the event. All this did not suffice to disabuse those that had taken her part — another confirmation of the old experience that whosoever

once, however innocently, was caught in the net of diabolical deceit, is not easily rescued.

As Mother Frances, on account of trouble with her feet, could not leave the house, the clergymen referred to above visited her, and with them came her reverend brother. After highly praising and commending the supposed divinely favored person, they proposed to Mother Frances to resign her office. She answered plainly, that she was of a different opinion, and would not resign. Her brother remarked: "You will, then, oppose the will of God?" She closed the interview with the words: "If I could discern the will of God in this proposal, I would immediately resign my office. I have shown my willingness to do so on a former occasion. But I cannot recognize the ravings of a demoniac as the expression of God's will. I shall not yield to the devil."

Mother Frances now thought it high time to act, in order to bring the matter to a close. Despite all expostulations, and though the supposed saint forgot her role and threatened to commit suicide if she was separated from Sister Mary, she had her brought to Aix la Chapelle. There she was kept, separate from the community, under strict surveillance, und soon asked to be dismissed, which wish was immediately complied with. Soon news came that she had turned up in Mayence in the role of a pilgrim travelling barefooted to Rome. Bishop Von Ketteler had her arrested and sent to Cologne, and thus her deceptions were brought to an end.

7. Sister Mary, so dear to Mother Frances, was recalled to Aix la Chapelle. Though resolved,

after a conference with Bishop Laurent, to have nothing more to do with the affair, she was by no means convinced that she had been the victim of an imposition. Only after being sent to Bonn, where she sincerely stated the whole occurrence to the Sisters' excellent confessor, pastor Lemmertz, was it made clear to her that these extraordinary manifestations, not to be explained naturally, were not supernatural graces, but deceptions of the devil, who had well-nigh succeeded in destroying the Congregation by creating a schism in this work of God. The poor Sister, in everything else so discreet, sober-minded and well meaning, had really been so ensnared, that she had resolved to leave the Congregation, and to found a new one under the direction of the deceived and deceiving impostor. It is not possible to describe the good Sister's repentance, and her gratitude to God and Mother Frances, without whose aid, she averred, her soul would have blindly plunged into the abyss of perdition. In these sentiments, and in her gratitude towards her deliverer, she persevered until death. God seems to have permitted this infirmity in her in order to prepare her by deep humiliation and total self-surrender for her profession and death, which latter occurred in 1858. Until then she rendered good service to the community. An excellent administratrix of external affairs, she assisted the Sisters by word and deed. She gave the very best example, especially in the veneration of and submission to the venerable Mother, whom she assured even on her death-bed of her gratitude and devotion.

8. This affair moreover proves that Mother Frances was by no means addicted to extraordinary ways, and that she was not credulous regarding visions and revelations. This is also shown by another instance, which happened some time later. A young woman was received as postulant on the recommendation of her pastor, a priest well disposed towards the Congregation. Her exterior deportment was irreproachable, but soon she mentioned visions and extraordinary manifestations of grace. Mother Frances did not trust her. To the great offence of the priest that had sent her, she was dismissed. Some years later she again presented herself with a letter of recommendation by the same priest. This letter was supplemented by another, which purported to have been sent by an unknown gentleman to the priest. The anonymous writer professed to have been moved by the angelic virtue of the person recommended to conversion from infidelity to faith. Mother Frances immediately discovered that the young woman had written the letter herself, which fact the latter acknowledged later to her pastor.

9. Such occurrences warrant the following remark: As there appear from time to time impostors of both sexes in worldly circles, who live by their wits on the credulity of their victims, thus also do female impostors, with a counterfeit halo of sanctity, invade convents under various, often most cunning pretexts, either for the purposes of pecuniary gain, or to delude people under the cloak of religion by their intercourse with the guileless Sisters. The Congregation of Mother

Frances always being ready to rescue souls from danger, its various houses were not rarely invaded by deceitful impostors. Even a woman notorious throughout all Germany for inventing supposed grave cases of conscience by which she was wont to perplex confessors, tried her luck with the Sisters, but was soon unmasked. The Annals appropriately remark, that they never yet succeeded in converting such persons possessed of the spirit of falsehood, while their endeavors to lead persons abandoned to vice to a thoroughly reformed and penitential life often obtained most satisfactory results.

10. Hence the exhortation and admonition of the Apostle: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I. John, IV. 1.) And, as according to the doctrine of the great St. Anthony nobody can escape the innumerable snares of the evil spirit, except the humble, hence all have reason to pray humbly: "Lead us not into temptation."

CHAPTER IX.

The first Mother-House. — The first Profession. — Conclusion of the Notes of Mother Frances.

1. The apartments in the old Dominican monastery occupied by the Sisters were at their disposal only during the good pleasure of the city authorities. Moreover, they were unpleasant and unhealthy on account of the close neighborhood of the syphilitic

patients, and had other drawbacks. When, therefore, the community increased from year to year, it became indispensable that it should have its own home. Mother Frances, though having no means at her disposal, firmly trusted that God would provide one for them.

2. In the summer of 1852, the former convent of the Poor Clares in Marschier street, which had been suppressed in 1803 and purchased by a Protestant cloth manufacturer, was advertised for sale. It had been built for the Poor Clares in 1616, who placed it, in 1649, under the patronage of St. Joseph. The buildings were well suited for a religious community. The entire property, including a large garden, was valued at 21,000 thalers.

The friends of the community, especially Bishop Laurent, urged Mother Frances to buy the place, and she herself was greatly in favor of doing so. Though she had no money to make immediate payment, which was a condition, she hoped that Providence would assist her to negotiate a loan. She applied to several persons in Aix la Chapelle, but God permitted her confidence to undergo a severe test; she did not succeed in obtaining the necessary means, except a small sum which she received of her family. Those that had the money would not loan it, and those that were disposed to do so had not the funds. She applied to Baron Boeselager, the founder of the branch house in Bonn, and obtained from him the loan of 10,000 thalers without interest. Encouraged thereby, she renewed her efforts in Aix la Chapelle, but without

success. As the sale was to be effected in a very few days, she was discouraged, and resigned herself to give up the plan. Notifying Bishop Laurent of her failure, he reminded her of his sentiments concerning the "poverty of St. Francis," and told her that she now experienced what such phrases amounted to. This attack on her most sacred convictions was more painful to her than the failure of her plan. Weeping, she went home, and it being just noon, told the portress that she would not come to dinner. Then she went to the former Franciscan church of St. Nicholas, where she remained weeping and praying for several hours. Returning home in the afternoon, she was met by Sister Veronica Wildt, who told her that she felt moved to apply to one of her relatives, an ecclesiastic living in the neighborhood of Aix la Chapelle, for the money. Though no one acquainted with the circumstances had the least hope of success, Mother Frances nevertheless permitted the Sister to make the trial. As early as next afternoon the sum of 8000 thalers was placed at her disposal by letter. The rest was easily obtained, and on the feast of Our Lord's Transfiguration, August 6th, 1852, the house was purchased at the price fixed. Greatly rejoiced, Mother Frances and her community went before the Blessed Sacrament and recited the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the timely assistance of Providence. Bishop Laurent was greatly affected at this unexpected turn of affairs, and when he confessed, as related in another chapter, that he had come to a knowledge of the great value and efficacy of evangelical poverty only through Mother

Frances, he presumably had reference to the above occurrence.

3. The old convent, which consisted of several buildings, some of them out of repair, was vacated by the occupants only in the spring of 1853; even then, according to the contract, some of the apartments continued closed to the Sisters. Many repairs and alterations had to be made before the Sisters could occupy the convent. The same was the case with the church, which had served for years as a storage house for wool. Sister Mary superintended the repairs, which were hastened as much as possible, so that the Sisters might take possession soon. To provide room for their great number, every space of the house had to be utilized, and yet many inconveniences resulted. Later, new buildings were added, and more comfort was secured.

Two days before the Sisters took possession, the public was permitted to inspect the convent. The visitors were surprised at the poor furniture and narrow passages, small cells, short and narrow bedsteads, absence of chairs, etc. Even poor persons contributed to furnish the house more comfortably.

4. On the feast of St. Clare, 1853, being the second anniversary of the first vesting, the entrance into their new house took place. However, several of the Sisters remained in their old home for the service of the poor in the two parishes of which they had charge. Divine service, so long interrupted, was resumed in the church, now beautifully restored, by a High Mass celebrated by the dean, at which the choir of St. Peter's sang.

There still lived in Aix la Chapelle, in great retirement, one of the former inmates of the convent of Poor Clares suppressed in 1803. A novice, she had been ruthlessly thrust out into the world by the decree of suppression. Mother Frances invited her to dine with the Sisters on the day of the opening of the convent. It is impossible to describe the joy of this aged virgin, and of the Sisters on the occasion. The auspicious day closed with an afternoon service and sermon, and in the evening all the houses in Marschier street were illuminated. Henceforth, the Sisters had Mass every day, at which the pious laity of the neighborhood assisted in numbers. In consequence of the more convenient arrangement of the convent, the regular observances were greatly facilitated.

Shortly after the first profession, soon to be mentioned, the election of a Superioress was in order. Of course, Mother Frances was re-elected for the term of five years, in accordance with the regulations of the first Constitutions. Sister Mary assisted her with great diligence and dexterity in the management of the household and external affairs; Sister Joanna superintended the various occupations of the Sisters in and out of the house, and had charge of their apparel, and of the postulants. Order, peace and charity made it easy for the Sisters to fulfil, despite all sacrifices, the words of the Psalmist: "Serve the Lord with gladness." (Ps. XCIX. 2.)

5. Turning back a year, we supply a few omissions. On the 25th of August, 1852, the feast of St. Louis, king of France, Mother Frances and

the twenty-three other Sisters who had received the habit a year before, pronounced their perpetual vows before the archiepiscopal commissary, Dean Dilschneider, in St. Paul's church. It was the first religious profession in the Congregation. On this occasion all the professed Sisters received the red cross, which had hitherto been worn on the scapular only by Mother Frances, and Sisters Mary and Joanna. They had been carefully prepared for the sacred act by Father Minoux, Provincial of the Jesuits, who conducted the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius for them. Mother Frances writes: "This happy day will be ever memorable to us. We were well prepared for it. And yet I must look back sorrowfully at the past. How many things I would now perform quite differently! There is much I would like to efface, even if it should be done at the greatest sacrifice. But 'it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me.' (Ps. CXVIII. 71.) I will say this from all my heart with David, the great penitent. What I so deeply deplore here must be understood as having reference to my own soul. For, as far as the Congregation is concerned, I can truly say that the Lord Himself was its director and guide. My will always adhered to the Lord, but for a time my heart was not far from deception and blindness. I struggled upward like a tendril, but nature drew me back to the earth. Finally, the Lord in His mercy came to my assistance. The love of His Divine Heart was demonstrated to me, and by the mental contemplation of this centre of love I was healed of the bite of the venomous serpent. The

penetration into this sanctuary of divine love then drew me away completely from things temporal and sensuous. I shall never be able to thank God adequately for this entirely undeserved grace."

6. We must not omit to mention that Mother Frances showed great gratitude to the Jesuits, especially to Father Minoux, and to his successor in the office of Provincial, Father Behrends. Of the first she says: "This good man was solicitous for us in a most fatherly manner. Concerning myself, I owe him more than I am able to express. I shall be everlasting grateful to him. When, after his second term as Provincial, he was sent to Paderborn as local Superior, I was permitted to write to him as often as I felt the necessity, and this was a great help to me." She supplements this statement by an addition, seemingly made later, in which she refers to the great and salutary influence which Father Behrends exerted on her interior life.

7. She became acquainted with this "man of God," as she calls him, in 1856. Although suffering from a partial lameness, she had spent the night with a prisoner at Aix la Chapelle, who was to be executed in the morning, and she could not receive the zealous priest when he happened to call on the following day. When he came a second time, he made a fervent address to the Sisters on mortification. Afterwards, he spoke to Mother Frances on the love of our crucified Lord, exhorting her to be generous in returning it. She writes: "He thereby touched the deepest chords of my heart. More was not needed to inspire me with

full confidence in this man of God, as well concerning the graces by which God had drawn me to Himself, as concerning my sins. With the greatest clearness, and in an earnest, fatherly manner he showed me what I ought to observe and what to omit. He especially recommended to me the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to which I had hitherto not felt inclined, because I had not rightly comprehended it. Thus I, and our entire Congregation, are indebted in a great measure to this devout client of the Sacred Heart, because from this devotion we received great graces. It seems that Our Lord made use of sufferings not only to make me do penance, but to draw me to Himself; for at that time I was suffering much. I felt continually urged to give my heart to Our Saviour, my whole heart, without reserve. It is true, I had consecrated this heart to Him from childhood; but I did not always succeed in keeping away from it all that was not God; and thus it happened that unknowingly my heart was divided for a time, to the great detriment and bitterness of my soul, and to the grave offence of my Redeemer. Oh, that I could repair the injury done to His Sacred Heart! No sacrifice would be too great for me; even if I should have to offer my life-blood I would willingly give it, confiding in the help of divine grace, without which we poor mortals can do nothing. Nevertheless, my dear Saviour, as Thou shalt scarcely deem me worthy of this grace, I will be the more zealous to make some reparation to Thee by penance and tears. One thing only I implore of Thee, and and will continue imploring: Dearest Saviour, let

me rather die, even at this very hour, than to permit my heart to be guilty of the least unfaithfulness towards Thee!"

8. With this truly Catholic effusion of a contrite and humble heart the account given by Mother Frances of her life ends. What she related in it proceeds on the one hand from the due acknowledgment of the grace of God, on the other from an humble consideration of her own infirmity and misery. She depicts, in those notes, sincerely and truly, her interior life. Even in her early years God, the Sun of natural and supernatural life, had risen on the horizon of her soul and gave her the impulse that directed her to her last end. Her many virtues and good works, her extraordinary mental endowments, her affability, the general admiration and love which she compelled — all these gifts might have easily become obstructions on her way to God, and might have impeded the progress of her spiritual life, had not God, by His light and direction, taught her to descend into the depth of her soul, and to learn to know and to feel her own misery and need of redemption.

This divine guidance produced three effects in her soul: First, she learned what St. Paul expresses in the words: "I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before." (Philip. III. 13.) Furthermore she was taught that to God alone is due the honor for all good, as the Council of Trent declares: "Far be it from a Christian to confide in himself or to glorify himself and not the Lord,

Whose bounty towards mankind is so great that He desires His gifts to become their merit. And as we all offend in many things, everyone must have before his eyes on the one hand His mercy and goodness, and on the other His rigor and His judgment.'' (Sess. VI. 10. — Sess. XIV. 2.) Finally, from her faults which were scarcely noticeable to others, she drew the precious fruit of that humility and penitence of spirit, with which her notes abound, and which illustrate her life. Thereby she shows herself a true child of the Church, which exhorts all to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. Thus St. Augustine taught and practised even on his death-bed. According to Possidius (VI. Sent. 26.) he was wont to say, that after receiving holy baptism even good Christians should not depart this life without bringing forth worthy and condign fruits of penance.

CHAPTER X.

New Foundations.—Difficulties.—Celebration of the Declaration of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.—Death of Sister Paula.

1. After the Congregation had obtained ecclesiastical sanction, divine vocations to it became numerous: many pious virgins applied for admission. The vestings and professions took place generally twice a year, and the number of participants was ever on the increase. At the second profession, January 25th, 1853, six Sisters pronounced their vows, and two postulants received the habit.

Urgent invitations to found new houses came from various places. As we are not writing a history of the Congregation, we confine ourselves to a brief mention of some branch houses founded by Mother Frances herself.

2. At the solicitation of the pastors at Cologne two houses, in different parts of the city, were founded in 1852. One was near the church of St. John the Baptist, and was opened on the 1st of September. The other was near St. Mary's church in the *Kupfergasse*, and was opened on the 17th of the same month. Home nursing and the management of a charity kitchen were the objects of both. On the 2d of February another house was founded at Burtscheid, in a wing of a former abbey, where the Sisters opened a hospital. On the 21st of March, 1854, they began their work in a small house in Ratingen. On the 11th of July, same year, they came to Mayence, at the urgent invitation of Bishop Von Ketteler, and on the 13th of December they arrived in Coblenz. The latter foundation was the result of the efforts of a pious young lady. Not able, on account of continued ill health, to enter a convent of the Good Shepherd, she willed her property for the purpose of founding a religious house for Sisters. In this foundation two excellent priests, the Rev. Mr. Krementz, now archbishop of Cologne and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, and Rev. Mr. de Lorenzi, who had become acquainted with the Congregation in Bonn, were instrumental. By a collection they furnished the necessary means for the purchase of a house, and made it ready for the Sisters with the assistance of some pious ladies.

3. During the following years applications for Sisters became more and more frequent. The development of modern life, resulting in the crowding into one place of a working population, gave rise to many evils, which it was found necessary to counteract by adequate remedies. The work of the Sisters being applauded and admired everywhere, the applications for new foundations became so numerous during the following years, that Mother Frances was obliged to defer, and even to refuse, many of them. According to an account before us, she refused, until her death, no less than twenty-eight such applications, true, sometimes reluctanly and sorrowfully, but compelled by circumstances. She was well aware of the danger that threatened the Congregation by a too rapid propagation. She often deplored her inability to give the postulants a thorough course of training in the mother-house. She considered it especially hazardous to appoint young Sisters Superioresses, because, despite their good dispositions, they were lacking in experience, and perhaps not sufficiently tried and firm in the interior life. And as the work in the branch houses already established continually increased, the sending of additional Sisters became necessary. Therefore, though postulants came in gratifying numbers, she never had a full supply of Sisters, much less a reserve force to take the place of such as became invalids. Then there came times, in consequence of three wars and several epidemics, that made great demands on the Sisters, without lessening their work in the houses heretofore established. Necessity compelled

Mother Frances to appoint every Sister to a post of duty, and many became victims of their zeal by an early death or a lingering disease. True, the venerable Foundress did everything in her power to prevent such disastrous consequences, but circumstances often proved more forcible than her will. Sometimes, also, the indication of the will of her archbishop, in whom she venerated God Himself, ended her doubts and objections. At other times zealous clergymen, well acquainted with her compassion for misery, would depict the destitution, and especially the danger to souls so vividly that she exclaimed: "Here help is indispensable; at whatever cost!" On the other hand, she firmly adhered to her principles, and in some instances even recalled the Sisters, when she believed that their ministrations in certain establishments were not in accord with the spirit of the Congregation.

Thus she was compelled during the summer of 1854, to the great sorrow of Dean Hennes and the Catholic citizens, to abandon the first branch house, opened at Juelich in 1850, because the town authorities would not consent to a separation of the sexes in the poor house of which the Sisters had charge, and moreover demanded an account of the expenses, although they were covered by alms collected by the Sisters.

Two other branch houses were abandoned by the Sisters on account of unsuitable circumstances. One was a small infirmary at Setterich, which they had opened at the instance of pastor Wildt, a great benefactor of the Congregation. They left there

on the 5th of October, 1854. The other was an establishment founded at the urgent request of the pious princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, in Sayn, which they abandoned after a short experiment, in the spring of 1856.

4. During the summer of 1853, Mother Frances had occasion to show her firmness in a conflict with the government, whose representatives insisted that the collection of alms by the Sisters should be subject to the control of the authorities. The new Congregation had been confirmed, as we have seen, by order of the royal cabinet even as to its peculiar form of poverty. Now the representative of the royal government at Aix la Chapelle, Herr Kuehlwetter, judged it dangerous that the Sisters should be allowed to collect alms for the poor without rendering an account of the disbursements of the same. After several summonses and tedious negotiations, Mother Frances never yielding, the authorities declared, in October, that the police would prevent the collections of the Sisters, if the demand was not complied with inside of three weeks. Mother Frances, on her part declared that in that case the charity kitchen would be closed. Through the intervention of Cardinal Von Geissel a compromise was effected, the government declaring itself willing to be content if an account was *once* rendered of receipts and expenditures.

5. In the spring of 1855, Mother Frances was again attacked by a severe illness. She had exposed herself during the cold winter to the inclemencies of the weather, and now suffered from an obstinate case of sciatica. To obtain relief, she

had to submit to the application of fire. The wound healed very slowly. One of her lungs was also affected, and her physician insisted on absolute rest and quiet. Nevertheless, lying on her bed of sickness, she did not omit to assemble the Sisters for the chapter of faults, and to give the postulants instructions in the spiritual life. Sisters that were present at these instructions describe the great impression the suffering Mother, on her hard, narrow couch, made on them, while she fervently spoke of the love of voluntary, strict poverty and mortification demanded of a child of St. Francis. The sorrow at the venerable Mother's illness was increased by that of her faithful Assistant, Sister Mary, who was also confined to her bed, and recovered only partially, dying in 1858. Mother Frances was aware of the good Sister's danger, and therefore appointed in her place Sister Gabriela Nellessen as Assistant. The latter was at that time Superioress at Bonn, and received her appointment to the new charge on the 29th of June, 1855. Mother Frances continued ill till next summer, when she recovered by the use of baths, as we shall relate below.

While thus lamed, and confined to her room, Mother Frances did not relax in her zeal for the conversion of sinners. Where she could not go, she sent a Sister in her place; again, those that came for consolation and sympathy, she admitted to her room. It greatly grieved her no longer to be able to visit and assist the poor and sick personally. At that time, and afterwards, she might often be heard saying that it was her most pleasant

recreation to visit the sick poor, and that she regarded it as a favor to minister in hospitals.

6. On the 31st of May, 1855, the Catholics of Aix la Chapelle instituted a great celebration in honor of the delaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pius IX. on the 8th of December, 1854. On that day, the houses and churches of the city were decorated most beautifully, and the celebration wound up in the evening with a grand illumination. So great was the religious enthusiasm, that the inhabitants of Aix la Chapelle, not content with this demonstration of their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, resolved to build, as an enduring monument, the splendid *Marienkirche*, (church of St. Mary), which is now an ornament of the city. It was placed in charge of the Jesuit Fathers. Of course, the mother house of the Sisters, and the branch house "at the Preachers" were not behind in decorations: church and convent were decked out in wreaths, transparencies, flags and lights. To judge from the Annals, the mother-house especially was a most beautiful spectacle. Mother Frances, on account of her illness, was carried to the chapter-room in a chair, and there gave vent to her feelings of devotion and veneration to the Blessed Virgin by addressing the assembled Sisters. Their joy cannot be described; yet it was saddened by the helpless and suffering condition in which they saw their beloved Mother.

7. Before the end of 1855, Mother Frances was called upon to make a great sacrifice, the more painful to her on account of the circumstances

which attended it. On the 1st of December her sister Paula died at the age of 35 years. Since her admission to the Congregation, in May, 1849, she had devoted herself with great affection and enthusiasm to her vocation; indeed, it seemed that her cheerfulness and courage were only increased by privations, sufferings and trials. Having lived a martyr to charity, she also had the enviable happiness of sacrificing her last strength in the service of the sick and in obedience, and of thus ending her life like a soldier at his post, but in a more noble manner. A victim of consumption, and very weak and suffering, in need of attendance herself, she nevertheless desired to be permitted to wait on the sick, and even to watch with them at night. At last, when her strength was too far gone for this, she was an example of humility, obedience and cheerful resignation to the will of God in the mother-house.

Now it happened, that a small society of pious young ladies in Reuland, preparing themselves for the religious life, often consulted Mother Frances, and finally implored her urgently to send them a Sister to instruct them for some time in religious observance. Mother Frances, not realizing the true state of Sister Paula's health, because the good Sister's strength of will triumphed over her bodily infirmity, sent her to them. But her weakened body succumbed during the journey to a cold climate; her condition occasioned a fear of her speedy dissolution. Immediately Sister Clare was despatched to bring the sick Sister back to the milder climate of Aix la Chapelle. During the

homeward journey her condition became so alarming that both Sisters had to ask the hospitality of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Montjoie. They were received with the greatest charity. But the vitality of Sister Paula was spent. With a glance at the image of her crucified Redeemer, she placidly breathed forth her generous soul. Mother Frances received the tidings of her beloved sister's death with genuine sorrow, but also with her usual resignation to the will of God. She sent her brother and Sister Joanna to bring the dear corpse to the mother-house. The profound and just sorrow of the entire Congregation occasioned by this loss, was shared by the pious Catholics of Aix la Chapelle, and of other cities where Sister Paula had ministered.

8. To describe the deceased, we add some traits of her character. Written and oral testimony agree in depicting Sister Paula as a soul of peerless love of sacrifice, charitable, humble and obedient. Not inferior to her elder Sister in energy, courage and presence of mind, she nevertheless sometimes followed her own judgment, so that she now and then went beyond the boundaries of prudence and possibility in the selection of means for the accomplishment of her magnanimous works of charity. For instance, when she had to use hot poultices for an affection of her throat, she nevertheless ventured out into the blasts of winter to visit the sick. At first she was engaged in nursing the small-pox patients in the old Dominican monastery, and had, amid the arduous duties of this trying service, many opportunities of proving her charity. As

Superioress at Juelich she showed intrepid courage and preserved continual cheerfulness amid the greatest difficulties, but allowed her charity to lead her to excessive liberality. She went even so far as to give away the Sisters' clothing, and soon experienced such pecuniary straits, that Mother Frances was obliged to send Sister Mary in her place in order to set things to rights again. As Superioress in Bonn she sacrificed what little health was left her. Zealous for souls, she was so anxious to reclaim erring females, that her ardor led her to employ means that are, indeed, to be admired, but not imitated. Once, when a young woman, whom she had succeeded in keeping away from danger for a while, intended to return to her former life, she snatched up a pair of scissors and cut off the tempted girl's beautiful hair, of which she was specially vain; and when even this heroic treatment had no effect, she ran out into the street and called two policemen into the house, whereat the deluded girl was intimidated so that she gave up her evil design. Great obstacles did not deter her from works of charity, nor did she long consider whether her plans for the welfare of others were feasible. Therefore the experienced confessor of the community, pastor Lemmertz, was wont to say to her when she informed him of her plans: "First set your feet on the ground again; then we shall see what is to be done." Then she would smile, and follow his advice. After Sister Paula's death this priest said, that she had a great share of the seraphic ardor of St. Francis, and that she had been docile and obedient like a child.

9. We conclude this scant notice of this beautiful soul with a sentiment to which she herself gave expression just before she died: "To live in religious obedience is well; to die in the exercise of obedience is better." — If religious life is likened by the masters of the spiritual life to a sort of martyrdom, which makes up by the length of its duration for what is wanting in pain, then death in the exercise of obedience without doubt claims still more rightly the title of martyrdom. Therefore it seems to us that God crowned the life of sacrifice of this generous virgin with a death not unsimilar to that of the holy martyrs, which again glorifies the Son of God, "Who was obedient unto death; even to the death of the cross." (Philip. II. 8.)

CHAPTER XI.

New Branch Houses. — Care of Cholera Patients. — Famine.—Mother Frances restored to Health. —Change in the Profession.

1. During the summer of 1855 three new establishments were founded. The institution at Kaiserswerth was opened on the 5th of July. At that place the Protestant deaconesses had an infirmary and improved the opportunity by exerting proselytizing influences on the Catholics. Opposite the beautiful and large house occupied by the deaconesses was a very poor, narrow and damp little alms-house with a few neglected inmates: this became the first home of the Sisters, where they had abundant opportunity of tasting the fruits of

poverty as true Sisters of the Poor. Sister Clement, Countess Droste-Vischering, was the first Superioress. Although, in consequence of her refined education, she doubly felt the stern realities of the beautiful ideal of evangelical poverty, the spirit of Christ was nevertheless so potent in her, that she deemed herself happy to exchange the enjoyment of wealth for the severe privations of poverty, and to find in that small, obscure house the pearl of great price mentioned in the gospel and trampled under foot by the world. To the Sisters she was such an example of the conscientious and cheerful practice of poverty, that they were imbued with the same spirit, and animated by the same cheerfulness. Nor was God's blessing wanting, and many a one stricken by sickness or poverty found bountiful aid for body and soul in that house. A prosperous institution developed in course of time from this very poor beginning.

2. A short time afterwards, on the 2d of August, the Sisters, with Sister Felicitas as Superioress, came to Crefeld. There were many difficulties to overcome, for the city at that time had only one church, with four priests, for 30,000 Catholics, who belonged mostly to the laboring class. The first impulse to this foundation was given by Miss Elisabeth Bush, who had entered the Congregation in 1854, receiving the name of Sister Bernardine. She had devoted her maternal inheritance to the creation of a fund in trust of the authorities of the Catholic church, the interest of the capital to be employed in defraying the rent of a house for Poor Sisters. In this house the Sisters commenced their

work. Later, in 1858, principally through the agency of curate Platzweg, who soon afterwards joined the Society of Jesus, a house styled St. Mary's Institute was founded for the purpose of instructing daughters of honest families in employments suitable to their condition in life and of educating them in a Christian manner. From small beginnings, this establishment so increased as to be able to exert a most salutary influence, and became very dear to Mother Frances. It even weathered the storm occasioned by the May Laws.

In Enskirchen, a house was founded through the exertions and with help of the means of the aged Dean Vogt. It was established for the purpose of home nursing among the numerous factory employes, and opened on the 7th of November, 1855.

3. In the fall of this year cholera appeared and made great ravages in several cities of the Rhine provinces, especially in Aix la Chapelle. The cholera hospital established in the old Dominican monastery in 1848, was now opened to receive patients of this class, and the exacting service was entrusted to the Sisters. Several fell victims to over-exertion, but only one, a postulant seemingly in the best of health, was attacked by cholera. She received the last sacraments, willingly offered her young life as a sacrifice to God, and expired after an illness of scarcely eight hours, a victim of charity.

In December, when the cholera became epidemic in Uerdingen, two Sisters were sent there at the earnest entreaties of the panic-stricken inhabitants, and began their charitable ministrations in a

dilapidated building near the Rhine, which had suffered greatly from a late overflow of the river. For their abode they had only one damp, cold room. The fear of infection was so great, that the inhabitants of the village did not permit the Sisters to enter their houses, though they did not refuse them alms for the sick. Fortunately, the epidemic soon ceased, and the overworked Sisters were enabled to return home about Christmas.

4. During the winter of 1855–1856, a famine caused great suffering among the poor. The authorities of Aix la Chapelle established additional charity kitchens, and desired Mother Frances to take charge of them. One of these kitchens, for St. Michael's parish, was established in the mother-house. Mother Frances had samples of the soup that was prepared there brought to her during recreation, and tasted it, praising the Sisters that had cooked it for their skill. Then the other Sisters would be given a taste, the rest being left for the postulants. The Annals facetiously remark, that amongst the latter there were some who swallowed their mouthful of soup not only from a desire to become perfect cooks, but rather as a supplement to the scanty dinner that had been served them. During the evening recreation the Sisters were employed in paring potatoes for the charity kitchens, and Mother Frances would improve the time by instructing them in the virtues becoming to religious, especially inculcating poverty, mortification and love of the poor for Christ's sake. Solemn silence reigned, interrupted only by the dull thud of the potatoes as they fell

into the baskets. The attending circumstances made the venerable Mother's words peculiarly impressive; for "words instruct, examples incite."

5. During March, 1856, sickness, caused by the famine, prevailed in the district of Waldbroel, and many were attacked. The government representative of the district, a Protestant, applied to Mother Frances for Sisters to visit and nurse the sick poor in their dwellings. Five Sisters, including the Superioress, Sister Augustine, repaired thither, and took up their abode in Dattenfeld, whence they went on their charitable errands. It had been whispered amongst the people that the Sisters sent by the government representative were Protestant deaconesses, and they hesitated to admit them to their homes; but the rosaries and crucifixes worn by the Sisters soon disarmed suspicion. They were joyfully received as ministering angels, who not only nursed the sick, but aided all by the contributions they had collected for charitable purposes in Cologne and Aix la Chapelle. The nursing was a difficult work on account of the distances to be travelled in reaching the homes of the patients, and because of the distressing destitution. For a while, death claimed many victims, but soon the situation became more hopeful, and after a month the epidemic ceased. The Sisters returned to the mother-house, all of them very much exhausted; but only one of them was attacked by typhus, and she recovered.

6. Mother Frances was still suffering from ill health. Her spine was painfully affected, and she could move only with great difficulty. The physicians insisted that she should use the waters of

Oeynhausen, a resort for invalids near Minden, and the Sisters endeavored by all means to induce her to follow this advice. But with her strict ideas of religious poverty, she resisted their entreaties until a formal command of her confessor assured her of the will of God. She proceeded on her journey accompanied by a Sister, still fearing to violate poverty, or to be regarded as one not belonging to the poor class. Therefore, on their arrival at Cologne, she could not be induced to use a carriage, but traveled the considerable distance from the station to St. Johann on foot, to her own and the attending Sister's great fatigue. Arrived at the watering-place, she not only observed great reserve and discretion, but also, as an indication of her voluntary poverty, great restriction in the use of all things, especially as regards food. As she herself needed but little nourishment, her companion, whose appetite was keener, believed herself obliged to forego her craving for more substantial meals. Luckily, three Sisters took turn in waiting on the venerable Mother, and each one cheerfully submitted to this voluntary fast when her turn came. As soon as Mother Frances had gained sufficient strength, the physician ordered her to take exercise. She complied, and following the impulse of her generous heart, began to seek out the huts of the poor on her excursions into the neighborhood, where she soon won all hearts by her mildness and charity. Soon also [illegible] ons of higher rank were attracted by th[illegible] of her individuality, and sought counsel and consolation with her in their manifold grievances. Even many years later some

of the Sisters had opportunity to observe what a deep impression she had unknowingly made on certain persons at that time, and how the good seed scattered then by her brought forth fruit.

7. Some letters written by her at this period, and still extant, serve to throw light on her interior life. In a lengthy circular addressed before Pentecost to the Sisters in various houses, she writes some beautiful, simple sentiments on the descent of the Holy Ghost and the import of the feast of Pentecost, and concludes with the following effusion of her heart: "Since then, the gates of heaven are opened, and the Giver of all good gifts is desirous of replenishing the earth with His bounty, yea, of renewing the face of the earth. Wherever He finds a heart prepared for His coming, He hastens to enter and replenish it with His gifts. Oh, that our hearts were prepared for this gracious visitation! O Jesus, Redeemer of the world, Who didst come to seek and to save those that were lost, and to lead back to the right path those that had strayed, by a glance Thou gavest contrition to Zacheus, didst convert Magdalen, didst fill Thy weak disciple with repentance: regard me also with one of those gracious glances! Let Thy divine eye, illuminated by the charm of heavenly love, rest on our cold, hardened hearts, and they shall be softened, they shall melt and glow in Thy love. By this glance send us from the throne of the Father, where Thou dwellest, the Holy Spirit, Thy Spirit of fire and light and love! Behold, we desire to give up all that displeases Thee, and are ready to do whatever Thou demandest. Let but Thy Spirit

aid us to accomplish it! Amen. — Your faithful Mother Frances. Oeynhausen, Friday before Pentecost, 1856."

8. Meanwhile the Sisters implored God in unceasing prayer for the recovery of their beloved Mother, and held a special devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord, in which she had great confidence. And indeed, her sufferings were in a great measure relieved, and finally, after her return home, she was restored to complete health, but suffered a relapse in 1859. After her recovery she went to Minden to visit the prison where, a score of years before, that valiant confessor of the faith, archbishop Clement August von Droste-Vischering, had been confined. On her return, she was received by her daughters with demonstrations of greatest joy. They feted her in poetry and song, the productions of their grateful hearts.

9. Towards the end of the same year, Mother Frances had to undergo another severe trial. In the establishment near the church of St. John in Cologne typhus attacked nearly all the Sisters about the same time. Two promising young Sisters died within a week, on the 17th and 24th of December. One of them, Sister Fidelis, was a sister of the Superioress, Sister Michael, (Angela Reifert, of Driburg); she was quite young, and, in virtue and appearance, a mirror of angelic purity. The Superioress, unwell before, overtaxed her strength in nursing the sick Sisters, and fell seriously ill. She was transferred to the mother-house at Aix la Chapelle, where she died on the 5th of February, 1857. After the malady had claimed three victims, the

Cardinal Archbishop was about to order the house closed, but on the positive assurance that no other Sister would die, confidently made by Mother Frances, he permitted the Sisters to remain. The venerable Mother's remarkable prediction came true.

10. The continual increase of the Sisters demanded an enlargement of the mother-house. In August, 1856, the corner-stone of a large addition in the east end of the garden was laid. Sister Mary, who despite her constitutional weakness, had recovered sufficiently to superintend the construction of the new building, thus had increased work added to her office of stewardess.

11. The five years' term of office of Mother Frances having elapsed, the second canonical election of a Mother Superior was held on the 24th of August, 1857. Mother Frances did her utmost to be released from her office, but she was unanimously re-elected, and confirmed by the archiepiscopal commissary, therefore she had to submit.

Soon thereafter a small establishment was formed at Muehlheim on the Rhine, for home nursing. In November the new addition to the mother-house was partly finished, so that the sick Sisters, who had hitherto suffered greatly for want of room, could be removed to two large, commodious and airy halls.

In October, 1856, a change was effected concerning the Sisters' form of profession. Until then, they had pronounced perpetual vows immediately after the novitiate; but as Pius IX. prescribed, though at that time only for convents in Italy, that the Sisters of communities with *solemn* vows should

henceforth pronounce only *simple* vows immediately after the novitiate, these vows nevertheless to be perpetual, Mother Frances resolved to introduce a change in accordance with the spirit of this law, although the decree did not affect the Congregation, which had only simple vows, and was not established in Italy. By her reverence for the ordinances of the Church she succeeded in obtaining, that the vows made after the novitiate were for three years only. During the retreat preceding this change, she had the reasons for it thoroughly explained. The novices to be professed were quite contented and edified — all except one, who made herself conspicuous by tears and lamentations during and after the solemnity. She moreover declared that she found comfort in her distress only in the fact that she had obtained permission to pronounce, in her own heart and for herself, the perpetual vows, which she would henceforth renew every day. This affectation and singularity plainly showed that she was actuated by misguided zeal. This was soon proven: instead of the *perpetual* fidelity to which she had so stubbornly pledged herself, she soon exhibited an unfaithfulness to her vocation that resulted, after a few years, in her application for leave to depart, which was granted.

12. Virtue does not spring from excessive and vacillating sentiment, even if directed towards good, but from a determination of the will, founded on the everlasting principles of faith, never to yield to the unruly passions and blind inclinations of nature, and never to desert the cross of Christ, but to follow in the footsteps of this our exalted Model, persevering in humility and obedience.

CHAPTER XII.

The Congregation transplanted to America. — The life of Mother Frances in danger.—Again attacked by Illness. — A new Undertaking. — Reward of Confidence in God.

1. After founding a house at Eschweiler, in December, 1858, Mother Frances devoted her time and care mostly to the plan of transplanting the Congregation to America. The hand of God is visible throughout the entire history of this new Province. An aged lady of Cincinnati, Ohio, the widow Sarah Peter, who years before, at Rome, had become a convert to the Catholic Church, had some time before visited Rome again, where she submitted to the Holy Father a plan of introducing German Sisters into her country for the service of the sick poor of German nationality, and Irish Sisters for the Irish poor. The Holy Father advised her to apply for German Sisters to some Austrian bishop. In Vienna she did not meet with success, but made the acquaintance of Miss Augusta von Tietz, of Danzig, who, at the age of eighteen, had become a convert to the Church, and as a consequence had been disowned by her family. For the last five years she had been occupied in works of charity.

2. When she heard of the American lady's plan, she offered to make arrangements with Cardinal Von Geissel, the archbishop of Cologne, to send German Sisters to Cincinnati, and to join those Sisters herself. Madam Peter consented, and went in pursuit of the same object to Ireland, where she

soon was successful. Returning, she came at once to Aix la Chapelle, to take the German Sisters with her. Meanwhile Miss Von Tietz's negotiations with the Cardinal Archbishop had been successful, and he had most earnestly recommended the Congregation of Mother Frances for the purpose. But the venerable Foundress at first made objections, continuing meanwhile to pray and engaging the prayers of others, to learn the will of God in this matter. Finally, after repeated consultations with the Cardinal, she resolved to found a house in Cincinnati. "It is indeed a serious undertaking for our young Congregation," she wrote to a Franciscan Superior whom she highly respected, "but I trust in the aid and help of Our Dear Saviour, Who called us, and Who is strong in the weak." Meanwhile, it was impossible to send Sisters with Madam Peter immediately, as she, in true American haste, had desired.

3. Mother Frances went to Munich, hoping to interest in her enterprise king Louis of Bavaria, a great benefactor of the American missions, and to obtain the means to defray the expenses of the journey for the Sisters. But she did not succeed in obtaining an audience, or even the prospect of aid, though she had a letter of recommendation from Cardinal Von Geissel, a special friend of the king. In Baron Von Overkamp, however, she found a staunch friend, and through his introduction she was most kindly received in the mother-house of the Bavarian School-Sisters. Furthermore, he obtained for her from the Louis Mission Society, the promise of the necessary funds to defray the

expenses of the journey. As soon as this matter was successfully settled, she hastened home in order to celebrate Easter in the mother-house. In the afternoon of Holy Saturday she arrived in Deutz, opposite Cologne, and had to cross the Rhine in order to go to the railroad station. The draw-bridge over the river was open, and as there was no time to be lost if she would make her train, she accepted the invitation of two gentleman to cross the river in a skiff. A new bridge was at that time in course of construction, and the current about the piers was very rapid. The boatman lost control of the skiff, and it came into dangerous proximity with one of the piers. Happily, the gentlemen seized the oars, and averted the danger by pushing back into the current. They succeeded in landing at another unfinished pier, on which they awaited the arrival of another skiff which brought them safely to shore. Mother Frances knew well that she had been in great danger, but she never lost her presence of mind. She simply said to her companion, Sister Raphaela, Superioress at St. John's: "Sister, make an act of contrition!" Both remained silent and resigned, but nevertheless suffered a great shock, and thanked God with all their heart for their deliverance. Mother Frances was able to take the next train, and arrived at Aix la Chapelle late in the night. She was quite exhausted from the long journey, during which she had religiously kept the rigorous fast which she was wont to observe during Holy Week.

4. On the 10th of August, 1858, five Sisters and a postulant set out on their journey to America.

Sister Augustine was Superioress of the little band, with Sister Felicitas as Assistant. Early in the morning they assisted at Mass and received holy Communion. Then the priest recited for them the *Itinerarium*, the official prayer of the Church for travellers. What conflicting sentiments must have animated the young Sisters, who were leaving all that was dear to them on earth to begin, in a foreign land, an undertaking of uncertain issue and attended with countless difficulties! Mother Frances, on account of the weak state of her health, could not accompany her dear daughters to Havre, the point of embarkation, but had to leave this task to the Superioress of the mother-house, Sister Gabriela.

In Havre, they found a German confessor in the excellent Father Lambert Bethmann, of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary. This deserving priest, whom we shall meet again during the course of our narrative, became from that time on a firm friend and protector of the Congregation, and of Mother Frances in particular. The Sisters could not embark before the 24th of August. They landed in New York, after a prosperous journey, on the 8th of September.

Miss Von Tietz, who had collected contributions in Europe for this mission, had gone in advance of the Sisters, to introduce them and prepare a home for them in Cincinnati. The Irish Sisters were already settled there; but when the German Sisters came nothing was prepared. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd kindly offered them hospitality.

5. As all the works inspired by God have to undergo the fire of probation, this undertaking was

no exception. Miss Von Tietz was no doubt led by the best of motives in her designs regarding the Sisters, but Mother Frances could not agree with her on the course to be pursued under the circumstances, and they separated.

The Sisters, abandoned by everyone, and not knowing where to turn, began a novena to St. Joseph, in order to obtain through his intercession the means to found a house, or at least to come to a conclusion whether they should remain, or give up the undertaking. They resolved that if at the close of the novena they should find no opening, they would return to Europe. On the eighth day of the novena they received quite unexpectedly the offer of the gratuitous use of a large building, in which they could also receive patients. From this day forward the blessing of God on their undertaking became more and more manifest. From the very beginning of their ministrations to the sick, remarkable conversions of abandoned souls took place; their influence and means increased; the extension of their usefulness, the confidence and liberality of the citizens of all denominations, and the evidences of divine mercy towards dying sinners were remarkable. God having built them a bridge across the ocean by the aid of strangers, His fatherly hand again compelled them to abandon the dependence on human help, and to have recourse, in the New World as well as in the Old, to His Providence.

At the beginning of the following year three more Sisters arrived from Europe in Cincinnati. In a short time many houses, (fifteen at the present

writing,) were founded: some with extensive hospitals in which thousands of sick found gratuitous and tender care, and countless sinners a good preparation for death.

6. Nevertheless, the difficult position of the still young Sisters, especially of the Superioress, Sister Augustine, was a source of great apprehension to Mother Frances. In a letter of October 4th, 1859, shortly after the retreat in the mother-house, she writes to that Sister:

"What can all our labor for others avail without sentiments of true humility, together with the greatest confidence in the grace and love of our God, joined with the ardent desire of greater purity and sanctity? It is unprofitable work—unprofitable for ourselves and for our fellow-beings. Oh, with what a yearning I have thought of you all! Could I have drawn you over here at the cost of half my life, I would have done so. And especially to you, my thoughts turned. O Sister, I am often anxious for you, when I behold you in your difficult position, so far away from the mother-house, without due foundation in the spiritual life. How often would my grave concern for you have caused me sleepless nights, had I not, in humble acknowledgment of my insufficiency, cast myself prayerfully and in tears at the feet and on the Heart of Our Divine Redeemer, recommending most earnestly to Him, the most benign and solicitous Shepherd, yourself and your little band. I never experienced an anxiety and distress like that which I feel concerning this small branch of our Congregation transplanted into a soil so far away.

Oh, how many prayers for light and aid ascended to Our Lord in this serious and responsible undertaking! But Our Lord, always the truest helper in all difficulties, heard my prayer. With His assistance I have found the Sister on whose shoulders I can place the cross of the office of Provincial Superioress, and now I can realize my plans concerning America. From the moment her functions begin, you, my good Sister, will be relieved of your heavy burden, and will retire to the ranks of a simple Sister living under obedience. O dear, good Sister, I expect from your good disposition that you will give the best example in this matter to the other Sisters. . . . I know how desirous you are to sanctify yourself by holy obedience, and how difficult it was for you, a young and inexperienced religious, to accept that difficult position. I shall ever remain grateful to you for the filial willingness with which you have bowed your shoulders to the burdensome cross of superiorship, and am glad to be able to relieve you of it. But now, dear Sister, improve well your time and circumstances for your own sanctification. Relieve me, your truly affectionate Mother, of the anxiety of having placed you in authority, perhaps too soon. You will do it if you show yourself in all things a true child of obedience. I know your zeal in the service of your fellow-men, your preference for active employment. I praise the former and acknowledge the advantages of the latter, if it is joined and made subordinate to the religious spirit. But, dear Sister, there is something much more exalted, something that is not

to be placed on the same level with the first, something by which everything else in religion, be it ever so good in itself, is sanctified and made pleasing to God: I refer to the sentiments of obedience to which the will and judgment surrender themselves captive."—As an example and proof of it she cites St. Francis Xavier, who declares himself willing, despite his inexhaustible zeal and the unprecedented success of his apostolic labors, to leave India at the least sign or intimation from his Superior. She then reminds the Sister to keep this communication to herself for the present, and to put the affairs of the house quietly in order. She concludes with the words: "The peace of the Lord be with you and all the dear Sisters! May your whole house be penetrated with it! This is my blessing for you and all the dear Sisters."

Sister Augustine was succeeded by Sister Felicitas, who belonged to the first band of Sisters that came to America. Her predecessor was very grateful to Mother Frances for having relieved her. Her health had suffered from the effects of the climate, and in the spring of 1860 she was recalled to the mother-house, where she served for many years in the capacity of stewardess.

7. In the beginning of the year 1859, Mother Frances in consequence of overwork, was again attacked by her former illness, sciatica. She could not move, and had to be carried from place to place. In order to compel her mind to rest, her physicians and the spiritual director insisted that she should go somewhere else. She repaired to the convent of the Holy Family in Eupen, with

whose inmates she was on very friendly terms. The rest and solitude there benefited her; but she returned home only partly cured, and her recovery was very slow. Scarcely had she regained a little strength, when she resumed her usual employments, and seriously entertained the thought of visiting her daughters in Cincinnati. She had received tidings of the success of the Sisters there, together with a most urgent appeal for more Sisters, as their number was far too small for their increasing duties. The Sisters on the other hand implored her not to hazard so venturesome a journey in her precarious state of health, and at last she resolved to send Sister Gabriela to gather authentic information regarding the establishment across the ocean. Sister Dominica, later Provincial Superioress in America, and two other Sisters were sent over with her.

8. During the summer of the same year, the government representative in Aix la Chapelle, Kuehlwetter, prevailed on Mother Frances to take charge of an undertaking in which he had engaged for the benefit of the poor. To relieve destitution during the prevailing dearth of provisions, he had formed a joint-stock company for the purpose of establishing a large eating house, where the provisions were cooked by steam. Here the subscribers should be furnished at a nominal price with meals, which they might either take home or consume in another apartment of the house. The entire furniture and personel had been imported from Berlin. But the expense during the first year greatly exceeded the receipts. The projector now

appealed to Mother Frances to undertake the management of the enterprise, even to keeping its books. She consented, and in July the entire staff, except one stoker, was dismissed. The Sisters commenced operations, assisted by some of the recipients of their charity, who were allowed to live in the rooms formerly occupied by the employes of the institution. Sister Bonaventure was appointed Superioress. The charity kitchens in the various parishes were now discontinued, and the distribution of meals was made from this centre. The tedious work of paring the potatoes, however, again fell to the mother-house, and was performed as before during the noon and evening recreation. Despite the great saving effected by this change, the expectation of the projector of seeing the expenses fully covered by the receipts, was not realized. Nevertheless, he expressed himself as well satisfied with the results attained by the Sisters.

9. A circular of Mother Frances informs us that by a combination of circumstances, and especially on account of the new building, the cost of which greatly exceeded calculations, the mother-house, in 1859, suffered for want of funds. But she was not disturbed thereat, for she trusted implicitly in God. Though she had a considerable sum on hand, which had been collected to defray the travelling expenses of some Sisters about to start for America, she would not use it for the payment of debts as she had been counseled; she left all to Providence—and behold, from the father of Sisters Gabriela and Paula Nellessen she quite unexpectedly received their inheritance, which

represented a very considerable sum. In thanksgiving, she ordered a *Triduum* of prayers, and gave the Sisters a half-holiday.

10. Whosoever trusts in God, and does what is in his own power, shall not be confounded. If we fail so often in our purposes, the fault lies with us; therefore we must apply to ourselves the words of St. James: "Ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (James I. 6, 7.)

CHAPTER XIII.

Part of Mother Frances in the foundation of a Community of Brothers of the Third Order. — Her Solicitude for other Religious Communities.

1. Mother Frances spent her energy not alone in directing her Congregation, which continued to increase in numbers and in houses; she exerted her influence in wider spheres from year to year. We shall refer later to her bounty towards individuals and families who had recourse to her for counsel, consolation and help; here we simply intend to relate some instances of the unselfish charity with which she aided other religious communities.

Above all, we emphasize the fact that she may truly be regarded as the Foundress and Mother of a community of Brothers of the Third Order of St. Francis. If St. Teresa, the great foundress of the Reformed Order of Nuns of Mount Carmel, is

venerated also by the Reformed Male Order of Carmel as its foundress and Mother, the Congregation of Poor Brothers of St. Francis can in truth give the same title to Mother Frances. She it was that imbued their founder with her spirit; she led him to know and recognize the true sphere of his new organization, and continued to aid him and his successors by her prayers and counsels. She also, during the first years, supplied them, in a great measure, with means, and she continued till her death to assist them in removing the obstacles which threatened the young Congregation.

2. The teacher in St. Peter's school, John (Philip) Hoever, a pious Catholic, was the instrument chosen by God to found this religious community. After living in happy wedlock for some years, and being the father of two sons, he awoke one morning to find his wife a corpse. Deeply affected by this terrible visitation, and convinced of the instability of human happiness, he resolved to devote his future life to God alone. Henceforth prayer and austerities were his sole occupation. Entering into spiritual relations with Mother Frances, her counsel induced him to devote himself, in company with others, to works of charity. He sent his two sons to a Jesuit college, and with three companions, removed to a small house adjoining the mother-house of the Congregation founded by Mother Frances. For some time, he continued in the capacity of teacher. The little society, whose four members joined the Third Order of St. Francis, began a sort of conventual life. The Sisters supplied them with food. On the eve of Christmas, 1857,

the first members of this community assembled before the crib of the Divine Infant, and offered themselves, body and soul, to His service. They hoped, by perseverance in prayer, to ascertain the will of God concerning the branch of charity to which they should devote themselves. For a beginning, they had engaged in the service of the sick.

3. In a memorandum-book of Brother Leo there is a note concerning a peculiar dream which Mother Frances had in regard to this community. "One night, after Mother Frances had implored God with more than ordinary fervor to make known the object of our community, Our Divine Saviour appeared to her in the form of a little child wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and gave her to understand that the education of neglected boys should be the work of our community. Next day she sent a little boy of two years to Brother John, with the remark that through Mother Frances the Infant Jesus sent him this child to nurse and bring up. Brother John and the rest were in church at the time, and only the doorkeeper was at home. He put the little child into Brother John's bed, and on the return of the latter led him to it. Greatly moved, the good man lifted up His eyes to heaven and thanked God that He had indicated His will concerning his vocation through His servant, Mother Frances."

4. Mother Frances succeeded in obtaining ecclesiastical recognition by the archbishop for the new community, which took the name of "Poor Brothers of St. Francis." In the election, which was held in presence of the archiepiscopal com-

missary, the Rev. Dr. Kloth, on the 17th of December, 1858, twenty-three Brothers cast their votes, and elected Brother John first Superior. To Mother Frances they were also indebted for the means with which to purchase, in the beginning of 1860, a large house, which they prepared for the reception of boys. Amongst others, she advised the daughter of a wealthy family, who was about to join her Congregation, to assist the Brothers in the purchase of this house. The postulant donated the sum of nine thousand thalers for this charitable purpose. Mother Frances also presented to the Brothers the first altar of her own chapel, with a large devotional crucifix. In 1866 the Brothers established a branch in America, but at first did not find a suitable sphere for their work. Through the efforts of Mother Frances they were called to Cincinnati in 1868.

5. In this connection must also be mentioned the co-operation of Mother Frances in the foundation of a female community in Westphalia: that of the Congregation of Poor Sisters of St. Francis at Olpe. Their foundress, Mother Teresa, came to Aix la Chapelle in 1864, to consult with Mother Frances on various difficulties, and to enlist her personal sympathy. She, ever ready to assist all in need, went to Olpe the following July, and remained there for some time. An account of this visit says: "She assisted us in great difficulties, instructed the Sisters in religious observance, aided us by her counsel, and gained the confidence and love of the whole community. Towards the children in our orphan asylum she was very charitable, and

visited them often. She permitted me to make the retreat in the fall of this year in her mother-house in Aix la Chapelle, and to remain for six weeks in order to inspect their institutions and to learn many things that were useful for our Congregation. As she observed that our chapel was in want of the necessaries for divine service, she was anxious to have us supplied with them. She gave us vestments, stoles, surplices, office books and other devotional works." A further notice states that she had several Sisters of the new community instructed in the art of nursing the sick; that she received a sick Sister, for whom the physician had ordered a change of climate, into the mother-house at Aix la Chapelle, where she was lovingly cared for, and that she always assisted the Superioress of this community in her difficulties with an ever constant charity.

6. Mother Frances had the greatest veneration and charity for all religious Orders, and was ever ready to serve them according to her ability. Having a great devotion to St. Clare, she loved her daughters in a special manner, and rejoiced greatly whenever she had an opportunity of doing anything for them. An abbess of the Order, lately deceased, wrote of her: "Repeatedly, and in difficulties of every kind, she assisted us most magnanimously by her counsel and help. Her visits to us were a spiritual balm for me, refreshing to mind and heart, and were of great benefit to the community. Her whole demeanor had something ineffably captivating. From my first acquaintance with her in 1850, I had great confidence in and a

filial love for her, not dreaming that later I should be privileged to become her firm friend."

The same account tells us that in 1853, during the month of August, Mother Frances visited the convent of Poor Clares at Tongres, Belgium, where she was accorded the extraordinary privilege of being admitted within the enclosure. "The abbess and the Sisters received her at the door of the convent, when Mother Frances humbly prostrated herself to kiss the feet of the abbess; but she would not permit her. Instead, she raised her up, and they embraced. Visibly moved, Mother Frances assisted at all the exercises of the community, and greatly edified all by her saintly simplicity and humble reserve." The same might be related concerning many other female religious communities.

7. When two Redemptorists, Fathers Heilig and Fey, founded the first establishment of their Order in Prussia, she showed herself as devoted to them as to the Jesuits. Later, she proved her gratitude to them for services rendered the community by preaching retreats and sermons, in a truly magnanimous manner. Informed that they were in want of means when building their convent in Aix la Chapelle, she spontaneously sent them a considerable sum.

8. Her devotedness to the First Order of St. Francis was extraordinary. To render one of its members a service she considered a privilege. She treated the least lay brother with great veneration and maternal charity. The Saxon Province of the Holy Cross, suppressed but not entirely extinguished by the French and Prussian governments,

received, in 1844, a restricted permission to admit novices again. Mother Frances, who was called to the Third Order in 1845, was greatly rejoiced thereat. When that Franciscan Province rose from its ruins, and planned, amongst others, an establishment at Duesseldorf, she assisted the Fathers with a considerable donation. At the same time she indicated to them her desire and plan of having them settled at Aix la Chapelle. She exerted her influence with the clergy and citizens so successfully, that in 1858 the Superiors of the Province were invited to found a house, for a beginning, in the neighboring village of Burtscheid. But as the Fathers meanwhile had begun a foundation at Teutopolis, in America, they could not comply with the request. In a letter to the Provincial, April 28th, 1858, Mother Frances expresses great sorrow thereat, and continues: "Is there, then, nothing to be done? Oh, that our holy Father, St. Francis, would implore of God that we might have your reverend Fathers with us!" She continued her prayers and exertions, and obtained the consent of the Cardinal, Archbishop Von Geissel, for the establishment. Then she induced two aged ladies by the name of Krey to give two small houses and a garden for this purpose.

Finally, in 1860, the Franciscans took up their residence there. Father Bonaventure Wessendorf was the first Superior. Mother Frances had the greatest confidence in him, and till her death she continued to manifest her whole soul to him. He was confessor and director of retreats in the mother-house and other houses for over thirty years, and

by his merits gained the gratitude of the entire Congregation. Mother Frances continued in her maternal solicitude for the Fathers till her death.

9. About this time she also had an opportunity of showing her inexhaustible charity towards the Supreme Head of the Church. As is well known, in 1859 the Church was robbed of a great part of her states. To make up, in part, for this spoliation, and to supply the Holy Father with means for the government of the Church, the confraternity of St. Michael was established in Vienna, and spread rapidly all over Germany. Mother Frances had all Sisters enrolled in it, and took care to have the pecuniary contributions sent in for them. In order that the poor might not be deprived of anything, and that the Sisters might have an occasion to make a personal sacrifice for the purpose, she curtailed the expenses for food. Instead of the dish of meat given every Tuesday, it was replaced, on the first Tuesday of each month, by a more meager one.

10. This chapter mentions only some of the more conspicuous traits of the self-sacrificing spirit of Mother Frances; but they suffice to give us an idea of her magnanimous devotion to charity, and justify us in applying to her the words of St. Paul: "Not seeking that which is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved." (I Cor. X. 33.) The Apostle indicates the distinctive mark of that charity which proceeds from God in the words: "Charity seeketh not its own;" for it elevates the heart above the narrow limit of self-gratification to the common participation of the highest and best

good — God, Who is its ultimate object and its perfection. Happy he who here on earth, imitating the saints in heaven, reduces to practice the exhortation of the Apostle: "Let no man seek his own, but that which is another's." (I Cor. X. 24.)

CHAPTER XIV.

New Works of Charity. — Death of her Reverend Brother. — Severe Illness. — Introduction of the Recluses into America.

1. In their intercourse with the lower classes the Sisters very often found young girls just from school living in such deplorable family surroundings, that their falling a prey to vice, if not removed to a place of safety, was almost beyond question. But at that time it was very difficult to provide a place of refuge for such children in Aix la Chapelle. Experience had already shown that the orphan asylum conducted by the Sisters of the Divine Infant was not the place for these grown and neglected girls.

2. After long deliberations, Mother Frances resolved, in the winter of 1859, to receive first one, and then four of such girls into the mother-house. The apartments being much crowded, she had to lodge them in the attic. Soon the number of these girls increased to such a degree, that in 1862, when a new building was constructed, a part of it was reserved for them. A Sister devoted one hour every day to instruct the girls in the catechism, for they were sadly lacking in the knowledge of their

religion. They were also trained to domestic work, especially to washing, sewing and knitting. The greatest pains were taken to accustom them to order, neatness and modest behavior. Those that distinguished themselves in these qualities, and had attained sufficient proficiency in their work, where placed with good families. Excellent results were attained through the agency of this asylum; but for various reasons it was closed in 1875.

3. In July, 1860, the septennial great pilgrimage to the Relics in Aix la Chapelle took place. By a circular, dated April 21st, Mother Frances granted permission to all the Sisters wearing the red cross, to come for a day or two to the mother-house to take part in the solemnity. Besides, she exercised on this occasion, as also during the same solemnity in 1867 and 1874, unbounded hospitality towards the numerous pilgrims of all conditions that had recourse to the mother-house.

4. On the above-mentioned occasion God rewarded the faith and devotion of the Sisters by an extraordinary favor, which was regarded as miraculous even by Mother Frances. She mentions it at length in a letter to the Sisters written during the octave of St. Clare:

"Our Divine Saviour, in the abundance of His love and mercy, bestowed on us a great grace, for which we must be most grateful to Him. Our good Sister Thecla, whom you all knew a short time ago to be suffering and weak, was cured of her grievous malady by touching the sacred relic of the linen that enveloped part of Our Lord's body on the cross. Immediately afterwards she was

able to stand, walk and kneel without difficulty, and at the same time her vomiting also ceased. She is improving with each hour, and God willing, will in a few days be sufficiently recovered to join in the exercises of the community. Since her cure she assisted at Mass every day, was present at some of the exercises, and repeatedly asked me to permit her to follow the community life; but as she was very reduced, as you all know, I thought it desirable to allow her two weeks of rest for recuperation." She adds that two other sick Sisters improved after touching the holy relics, but not in a manner to be regarded as miraculous. Finally, she orders certain prayers to be said in thanksgiving.

The Annals confirm the recovery of Sister Thecla, adding that she soon joined in all the exercises of the community. Being of a very weak constitution, she was taught the art of embroidery by the Sisters of the Divine Infant, and henceforth delicate and overworked Sisters, and some of the young inmates of the house were employed in making sacred vestments and church ornaments.

5. On the 21st of April, 1861, Mother Frances was called upon to mourn the loss of her brother, the excellent priest Charles Schervier. He had been closely united with her since childhood, and ever proved a most generous benefactor of the Congregation. Of late years, he had served as inspector of schools, but besides attending conscientiously to this office, he voluntarily assisted in pastoral duties, was chaplain of the mother-house and the children's and patients' confessor. His

assiduity in hearing confessions caused a trouble of the chest, of which he died. During his illness he edified all that visited him by his sincere piety and resignation to the will of God, so that Mother Frances remarked that only on her brother's death-bed his profound faith and priestly fervor had become truly known to her, though she had been convinced of his piety from youth up. Towards noon on the day of his death he bent his breaking eyes on the picture of St. Joseph hanging against the wall, and said the consoling words: "I thank thee, St. Joseph, for having preserved the lily for me." His last act was to try to uncover his head at the sound of the Angelus bell to join in the prayer, when, after a short agony, the soul of the noble priest was freed from the fetters of the body.

Mother Frances deeply felt her brother's death, but her natural grief was chastened and refined by supernatural motives. In her memorandum-book we find the following words, written in April, 1861: "Adieu, dear Charles! By your death our souls are drawn nearer to each other. You will pray for me, as I pray for you with all my heart. Give greeting to Paula (her sister) from me. God grant that you find father and mother, and all the rest of our dear ones! R. I. P."

In a letter of April 21st, 1872, she says: "To-day it is eleven years that Charles died. St. Joseph received his dear soul."

6. In consequence of a cold contracted during her brother's sickness, Mother Frances again fell ill. An inflammation of the lungs set in, joined with asthmatic attacks, so that the physicians feared for

her life, and she herself thought she would die. She received the sacraments of the dying. About her condition she wrote to the above-mentioned Franciscan Superior on the 2d of May, 1862: "A year ago to-day I was, so to say, in the throes of death. In this connection I shall never forget the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, May 3d. How I thank the Lord for having granted me a little more time for penance! Pray for me that I make good use of this time!" The physicians prescribed absolute quiet, and forbade all visits of the Sisters, except those of her attendant, Sister Clare. To give her disconsolate daughters a proof of her affection, she once permitted the whole community to file slowly and silently through her room. But the view of their Mother, sick unto death, the painful expression of her look, which seemed to bid a last adieu, so affected the Sisters, that the procession was attended by loud and general sobbing. The prayers for the preservation of so dear a life, hitherto so fervent, were now redoubled. And God graciously heard them: recovery slowly began. As soon as she was able to travel, the physician ordered her to leave the mother-house. She went, with her attendant, to the great orphan asylum of the Sisters of the Divine Infant at Derendorf, near Duesseldorf. Rest, pure air, and a milk diet were so beneficial, that after some weeks she returned in health to the mother-house. The Sisters received her as a gift of God with fervent thanksgiving and indescribable joy, and she immediately took up her usual employments.

7. We have yet to add that in the same year a small class of recluses was established in America. Madam Sarah Peter, mentioned before, already had desired for some years that a convent of contemplative nuns might be established in Cincinnati. She now offered her house to the Sisters on condition that a department for recluses should be added, for whose maintenance the Sisters devoted to works of charity should provide. The archbishop gladly gave his consent, and thus Mother Frances was enabled to transplant her devout band of expiation across the ocean. On the 15th of October, 1861, she sent three recluses and some other Sisters to America. Sister Alphonsa was their Superioress. She had formerly been Superioress at Mayence, and had been transferred to the recluses about a year before. Mother Frances accompanied the departing Sisters as far as Verviers, and had the consolation to know that from Paris onward they should have the assistance and company of an excellent priest returning to America.

8. In several letters written to the recluses in the following years, Mother Frances fully explained her views concerning the object and the duties of this class. As we have hitherto referred only in a general way to this department of the Congregation, we now add a few observations of the Foundress regarding it. They are from letters reaching down to 1876, and are given *verbatim*, because they are not only an expression of her maternal affection for her daughters, but also a proof of her own wealth of interior life.

9. Soon after the Sisters' departure she wrote:

"May God's blessing follow you to the New World! Humbly and confidently implore for the people there knowledge of God and fidelity in His service. Pray for the branch of St. Francis there, but also for the trunk here." She often refers in her letters to the object of the recluses: "Your office is the mediatorship between God and the active department of the Congregation." — "You must endeavor in a special manner to assist us in attaining the glorious end for which we are all created, and were called to the religious life. You are, as it were, the Moses of the Congregation, whose duty it is to elevate and stretch out the arms, yea, to keep them stretched out, that we, battling victoriously, may save our souls, and may, by the grace of God, help to save the souls of many. . . . . I wish for you, in the fullest measure the rich fruits that came to us through the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. Then you shall have blessings and peace in abundance." — "You seem to understand well that the chief object of the class to which you belong is not "perpetual adoration," but the service of God by prayer and sacrifice. If this object can be attained by means of the former, so much the better; but perpetual adoration must not be introduced at the cost of the principal object, which consists in *true* prayer and sacrifice, so that you become victims of expiation pleasing to God."

10. She inculcated repeatedly perfect abandonment to the will of God, as being the main point. "We must not be ungenerous, but truly magnanimous; seeking to fulfil the will of God without having regard for ourselves, we must be intent on

meriting His favor. What is there greater, higher and holier than the fulfilment of the most holy, adorable will of God? It leads to the attainment of the greatest sanctity if we understand how to subject ourselves entirely to it. Abandon yourself blindly to divine guidance, and permit yourself to be sanctified by the means selected and ordained by God for the purpose. If you but understood what a singular proof of God's love for your soul it is that He makes use of this very means, so painful to you, to sanctify you and thus to draw you nearer to Him! Let yourself be transformed in peace by internal and external crosses sent by the Lord. In the hands of his most sublime Master we are well cared for." — "Let us abandon ourselves to the Lord in all things. He has hitherto guided our Congregation in everything. What a misfortune, if we were to interfere with or oppose Him in the least! Then, surely, human prudence would prevail, achieving only things transient and unstable."

11. She often recurs to the necessity of daily denying ourselves and bearing our cross. "May you all become saints! This is my most ardent desire. To attain this, there is yet much need of suffering, enduring and loving; I mean, suffering and bearing for Christ's sake, and loving Him, Our Lord, to Whom be praise for all eternity!" — "Courage, therefore, and confidence! Let us unreservedly follow Our Dear Saviour, without being deterred by the great difficulties that obstruct the way of the cross, and without anxiety regarding our daily small grievances." — "I wish for you the love and constancy of the holy martyr, St. Lawrence,

that you may become true martyrs in spirit." — "Now (1870) during the Council, you must become living holocausts. Not a vestige of self-will and self-love, etc. must be permitted to remain. Everything must be consumed by the sacred fire of holy zeal, and in the flames of charity. Then we shall be followers of our holy Mother, St. Clare, and our holy Father, St. Francis, of whom it is truly said: 'Living, yet dead; dead, yet living.' First of all it is necessary that you empty your hearts completely, that Jesus alone may dwell therein. With Him the Blessed Virgin and the saints will take up their abode, and in Him and with Him you shall have in your hearts whatever He desires to have therein. With this, we are rich enough, for therein consists our entire wealth, our whole happiness and bliss."

12. She develops this latter sentiment in two other letters. "We must implore Our Lord and strive more and more to die spiritually every day. On this happy death during mortal life depends all. Without this death we cannot approach Our Saviour. But, says St. Paul, "if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." (I. Tim. II. 11.) Thus we are dead and alive at the same time. This is that supernatural life which is attained by self-abnegation — to be ready for every sacrifice demanded by the Lord. By this we attain the likeness of true children. Oh what advantages such a death brings! The daughters of St. Clare must necessarily strive for this degree of perfection, or it will be impossible for them to fulfil the duties of their vocation." — "To achieve your object, you

must be dead in a holy manner: dead to the world, dead to nature, its desires and inclinations, dead to self, to your own will and propensities. Only when you are really dead to self, will the fire of divine love flame up in you and consume everything. Green wood does not burn easily, dry wood soon gives a bright flame. In a spiritual sense you must become dry wood, exsiccated in a holy manner. If you were thus disposed, your difficulties would be much less in number than heretofore. Strive, therefore, most earnestly to die to self, that Christ may live in you. Alas, we are our own greatest enemy, because we do not know how to combat our evil inclinations resolutely. We should continually grasp the knife to prune their evil excrescences at once. In all temptations, of whatever kind they be, throw yourself into the arms of our crucified Redeemer and have recourse to His Sacred Heart; thereby you will most easily overcome temptation. Teach the other Sisters also to do this, and be convinced that God will overwhelm you the more with graces, the more readily you assist the Sisters, and the more you are intent on making the yoke of the Lord sweet and the burden easy to them."—"You are right in observing, that in your vocation more temptations and interior trials occur than in active life. But this must serve to prove and purify your love. Do not yield to restlessness and perturbation, but generously overcome it, and in severe attacks make use of humiliation and trustful invocation of the Blessed Virgin, as the best means to gain the victory. Whatsoever causes disquietude and disturbance

proceeds not from the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God creates peace, the spirit of darkness causes trouble."

"Do not consider yourselves to be a separate and distinct community like the Poor Clares. This you are not; you are recluses, retired for the purpose of remaining at the feet of Jesus, there to pray for the Congregation. This is the 'stretching out of arms' to which you are to devote yourselves, and whereby you assist us in the combat, and help to obtain the victory."

13. She often expresses herself on the exaltedness of contemplative life as she viewed it and as she desired the Sisters to practise it. "The spirit of St. Clare is so sublime and exalted; it breathes a heavenly, a divine inspiration. By it we can easily understand how intimately her soul was united with Our Dear Saviour."

14. Mother Frances was continually united in spirit with her dear recluses. "How often I think of you, dear Sisters, and how I look back to the happy hours we prayed together! Yours is the best part; you can remain almost without interruption at the feet of the Lord. We have to go on the chase and to war; dusty feet and scratches are the result. Pray fervently for us, that we succumb not to the dangers, but loyally fulfil our duty." — "I congratulate you on your holy vocation; meanwhile I must devote myself to the office of Martha, because I am not called to the happy lot of contemplative Mary." — "Transporting myself in spirit amongst you, I feel great consolation, and experience a sort of union with you. How

sweet it will be in heaven, when we are united in beatific contemplation of God! But many a combat must precede, many a victory must be gained ere we land in the happy port. But courage and confidence! Grace is not wanting; it remains for us to co-operate with it in due manner until the Lord comes to call us." — "If I do not write to you, I am nevertheless in the most intimate intercourse with you and the dear recluses, and depend on your pious prayers and the sacrifices connected with them. Our duty here is to struggle, suffer and bear; in heaven the enjoyment will be so much the more exalted and blissful. But a few years more, and it is ours."

15. These letters are an additional proof that Mother Frances, by inclination and disposition of mind, was a contemplative Mary, whilst by obedience she was a busy Martha.

We conclude these extracts with a sentiment expressed in one of these letters, which is of importance to all Christians. She sustains one of her arguments by the following reasons: "Whilst Our Saviour dwelt in mortal flesh, He suffered also for the souls in purgatory. His internal and external sufferings on the cross exceeded the scorching of fire. It seems to me that He felt also the pains of the suffering souls in purgatory; for He embraces alike the future, the past and the present. He has said, that what we do to His members, He considers as done to Himself, and therefore we can assist Him by assisting His brethren. Should not this also have application to the suffering souls, whom He redeemed and made capable of eternal bliss by His most precious Blood?"

CHAPTER XV.

Mother Frances re-elected.—New Establishments.—Her first Journey to America.

1. Five years had elapsed since the last canonical election. Pentecost, 1862, was decided on as the time for the new election. It fell in June, the month dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Mother Frances experienced a holy joy at this coincidence, for she had a special devotion to both mysteries. She expresses this sentiment in a letter, and adds that "she desires to abandon herself entirely to this most sacred Heart, and to place all the affairs of the Congregation in its sacred wound." In another letter, just before the election, she writes to a Superior of the Franciscans: "What shall I tell Your Reverence at this late hour of my long term in an office so full of responsibility? Innumerable are the faults I have committed; the mercy of God alone can make amends. I cannot communicate in writing what passes in my soul; orally I might indicate it, and it seems to me that then I should feel relieved. But as our good God wills, thus it is well. I submit unreservedly to His holy ordinances."

All the professed Sisters wearing the red cross, and also those Superioresses of branch houses that had not yet pronounced their second vows, were called to the mother-house, where, after a retreat of eight days, they re-elected Mother Frances on Tuesday after Pentecost. Though she had declared beforehand that she could no longer serve as Mother, but desired to join the recluses to prepare

for death, she was compelled to accept the office. That afternoon the Sisters, amid great rejoicings, recited a poem, still extant, composed for the occasion by Bishop Laurent, in which the contrast of wishes of Mother and daughters was described and aptly illustrated, St. Francis and St. Clare finally solving the difficulty in a happy and harmonious manner. She herself writes to the above-mentioned Father, in a letter dated June 30th, 1862: "It has pleased the Lord not to release me, as I had so ardently desired. I was not deemed worthy of the better part by Our Dear Saviour; I am to remain a Martha, it seems. Five years is a long time; according to my presentiments I shall not outlive them. But as the Lord disposes; it is not for me to argue with Him. The Congregation, and we all, belong to Him. If it is His pleasure to use a worthless instrument to attain His adorable designs, His power and wisdom thereby shine forth so much the brighter. To Him I leave all, depending on Him, Who is strong in the weak."

2. To relieve in some degree her all but crushing burden of duties, Mother Frances now made the practical arrangement of appointing a Superioress of the mother-house, whose duties were similar to those of the Superioresses of the branch houses, that is, she was to attend to the domestic and personal affairs of the community over which she presided. From a letter of June 30th, 1862, we gather that the resolution of devoting herself exclusively to the affairs of the entire Congregation had caused her some hesitancy, because she feared the Sisters might consider that it sprang from a

desire of becoming exclusive. In order to reassure them, she explained the reasons for this new arrangement in an address, a copy of which is still preserved. Amongst other things, she emphasizes, how necessary it had become, first, to re-write and elaborate the Constitutions, which she intended to have printed; and secondly, to complete the internal organization of the Congregation, in order to bring it into accord with its extensive and growing development. She regarded the editing of the Constitutions as her first and most important duty. It could be performed only, she said, with the aid of continued fervent prayer, in which all the Sisters should join. — Her First Assistant, Sister Paula Nellessen, was appointed Superioress of the mother-house. Her faithful companion since 1845, Sister Joanna, was Second Assistant.

3. During the following years several new branch houses were founded; thus, one in Stolberg, near Aix la Chapelle, on the 23d of October, 1863. On the 10th of December of the same year, she sent Sisters to Erfurt, to manage the *Marien-Stiftung*, an institute for the education of girls for domestic service, and to engage in home nursing. Despite its numerous Catholic churches, Erfurt is principally a Protestant city. As a consequence, the authorities prohibited the Sisters to collect alms for the poor. Through the mediation of Her Majesty, the queen, later empress Augusta, to whom Mother Frances had recourse, the matter was settled to the satisfaction of both parties. For Mother Frances it was a source of great consolation to conduct her daughters to the region that had been the scene of the

wonderful charity of St. Elisabeth, the more so, because Erfurt still preserves memorials of the presence, and holy relics of the saint, towards whom she felt an extraordinary love and devotion, and whose characteristics and virtues she shared to a certain degree. Passing the Wartburg, she regarded the venerable pile with emotion and veneration, sanctified as it was by the heroic virtues and charities of the saint. She felt an ardent desire of ascending the rugged path leading to the castle, which St. Elisabeth had so often trodden going on or returning from her charitable errands to the poor and sick; but a sense of duty would not allow her to interrupt her official mission, and after remaining two days at Erfurt, she returned to Aix la Chapelle.

4. During the same year, negotiations were commenced with Cologne, concerning the acceptance of the management of the Hospital for Incurables in that city. Prominent Catholics wished to found, besides the *Mariensæule*, a shaft erected in 1854 in memory of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception, another memorial of this solemn declaration, to have for its object the relief and aid of the poor. As a result, the Hospital for Incurables was built, to become the home of such poor as had no prospect of recovery. Its management was offered to Mother Frances, but two letters written by her in December, 1863, prove that at first she was not inclined to accept the proposal. She feared that a too rapid increase of institutions under her care would exert an untoward influence on the spirit of the Order; and besides, she thought the Sisters who had hitherto been employed mostly in home

nursing and in small infirmaries, were not experienced sufficiently to take charge of so extensive an institution. On the other hand, the fact that the latter was placed under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin had a great attraction for her. Finally, her hesitation was ended by the desire of the ecclesiastical authorities, formally expressed. She writes: "We *must* undertake the management of St. Mary's Hospital in Cologne. It causes us no little difficulties, but the spiritual authorities desire us to undertake it. Thus we have to engage in more work than seems good for us. But I hope the Lord knows the weakness of our shoulders, and will sustain us by His strength, when our own infirmity and spiritual insufficiency proves an obstacle. You see, I live by hope and confidence." The furnishing of the house was left to the Sisters. It was dedicated and opened on Candlemas day, February 2d, 1864, by the Cardinal, Archbishop Von Geissel. Mother Frances wrote some verses in praise of the Immaculate Mother of God, which were sung on the occasion.

5. We must now turn our attention to an event that occurred some time before, and which engaged the attention of the Sisters on either side of the ocean for a considerable period. We refer to the journey of Mother Frances to America.

In the course of years the small colony of Sisters in America had greatly increased. Sisters were sent over repeatedly, and new establishments, especially one in New York, had been founded. Besides two houses in Cincinnati, they now had houses in Columbus, Ohio, Teutopolis, Illinois, in

Hoboken, a suburb of New York; and in Jersey City, New Jersey, one was planned. Of course, trials were not wanting. For instance, in a certain city misunderstandings concerning the establishment of a new house caused a conflict with the bishop. On this occasion Mother Frances wrote the following letter to Sister Felicitas, the Provincial Superioress, which abounds in admirable expressions of the true spirit of St. Francis:

6. "Just now I received your dear letter, which informs me of your trials, coming from higher authority. Dear Sister, I can tell you in truth that with all my heart I rejoice thereat. Oh, that I could send you this letter with the utmost despatch, even at considerable cost! Much as I love and respect poverty, I would do so without hesitation, in order to comfort you, and to tell you how glad I am that Our Dear Lord vouchsafes to permit our community in America to suffer thus. O dear, good Sister, with me thank Our Dear Lord for it with all your heart! Do not be troubled, even if a letter should be sent to the archbishop of Cologne and to me. I should only experience great consolation thereat. Be assured that in everything I discern the guidance of God, Who intends to form us after the image of Our Divine Saviour. O dear, good Sister, what a grace! It quite transcends all external work, be it ever so pure, so good, so pleasing to God. Behold I am ill: nervous pains in the head, the teeth, the neck, the chest etc., have rendered me quite incapable of performing my duties these few days. Since yesterday, however, I am improving. But I can tell you, that since

reading your letter my heart abounds in consolation; tears stream from my eyes, but they are tears of joy and gratitude. Oh, how good the Lord is! This is what I have desired for America. Now my prayer is heard; now I believe that the little Isaac of St. Francis will grow and thrive in the customary manner, amid trials and humiliations. You understand me, dear Sister. I desire to express my sentiments so that you may share them. I know it will be conducive to your peace and consolation.

"Now let us show that we intend to be true children of St. Francis. If we are really imbued with his spirit, we shall thrive, and the Congregation will be blessed in such humiliations. Above all, *prove* to the archbishop that we are submissive. Wherever he does not desire us to found an establishment, we remain away. This will even be greatly conducive to the interior life of the Congregation. And believe me, dear Sister, it is also the means of propagating it in the right manner. The more fiercely the Church of God is persecuted, the more does she thrive. . . . If I should find you irritated, or obstinate in this matter, I should feel aggrieved, and would exhort and reprimand you. Do but read the life of St. Francis, especially concerning his behavior towards the bishop who opposed him, and let it be read to the community, so that we may learn, in regard to this, as in everything else, to be thoroughly imbued with the sentiments of our holy Father."

7. The tender heart of Mother Frances yearned to see her children in America, and to observe how they prospered in their vocation under conditions

totally different from those in Europe. As to the sentiments of the American Sisters regarding a visit of their venerable Foundress, they are best expressed in a letter of Sister Felicitas, written on the 5th of June, 1863, and addressed to the Sisters of the mother-house. "You are unable to imagine our ardent, vehement desire to see once more our dear Mother. Not that the Sisters often speak about it, but their silent expectation and yearning is visible enough. There is not one amongst the good Sisters, but whose object is to be thoroughly renewed in spirit by our dear Mother. . . . By the grace of God, may nothing remain undiscovered by and unknown to her, in general and in particular, concerning the interior and exterior, the small and the great, so that we may become truly renovated, and replenished with and firmly fixed in the right spirit. . . . You know by your own experience what our Mother is able to do in this regard. Who is amongst us that had not occasion at one time or other to experience that God intended to help, heal and enliven us by our Mother, and by her alone? After this shall have been accomplished with each of us without exception, then we shall gladly and gratefully, and with peaceful hearts, give our dear Mother back to you."

8. Before starting on her journey, Mother Frances committed the care of the affairs of the mother-house to her two Assistants, and gave them and the Sisters written regulations to be observed during her absence. She recommended to them to sanctify the entire day, and to live in intimate union with God and in peace with everybody. St. Anthony

was elected patron of the travellers, and the sufferings and trials of the journey were offered up in advance for the souls in purgatory. After exhorting the Sisters to confidence in God, to the faithful performance of their duties, and especially to obedience, she recited with them the *Sub tuum praesidium* and the prayer to St. Francis, blessed them and took leave amid their sobs and tears. In company of Sisters Afra, Pica and Norberta, and a postulant, she left for America on the day after Corpus Christi. Her letters, written during the journey to various Sisters, not only describe her experiences, but incidently inform us of her truly maternal relations with the Sisters, and of the virtues she practised during the journey, especially of her courage, patience and piety. We give extracts from these letters, and supplement them by additions from the journal of one of the Sisters, who informs us of little incidents, and of the love shown towards them by the venerable Mother.

9. Mother Frances writes from Paris, that, so far, they had a safe journey, and that the archangel Raphael took good care of them at the station: a gentleman awaited the arrival of his sister-in-law, a sister of Sister Clare, and placed himself at their disposal. "Strange," she writes, "we had intended to write to this family, so as to have some assistance at the station, being strangers; but for fear of obtruding it was not done. And now God so disposed that this gentleman came nevertheless. Thus God provides, if we but confide in Him." — "This morning we visited the church of Our Lady of Victories, where we assisted at four Masses."

She thanks God for His protection, which she ascribes to the prayers and mortifications of the Sisters.

10. At Havre, the Rev. Lambert Bethmann had prepared everything for a short sojourn. This zealous and exemplary priest, curate of the Germans making Havre their point of embarkation for America, had shown a fatherly solicitude for the various bands of Sisters directed to him, and had thus become known to Mother Frances. The German emigrants, as a general rule, availed themselves gladly of the spiritual services of Father Lambert, and in the course of time it had become necessary to provide a church for their special use. In this plan, Mother Frances had taken great interest. To show her gratitude to the zealous priest, she recommended him to benefactors, and sought to gain the assistance of influential persons for him. She had advised him to attend the Catholic Congress assembled at Aix la Chapelle in 1862, and induced him to address it on the needs of his mission. While in the city, he had been the honored guest of the mother-house. Father Lambert's efforts were crowned with success. One fruit of his eloquent address was the foundation of St. Joseph's Mission Society, which ever afterwards found a firm friend and benefactress in Mother Frances. The building of an emigrants' church at Havre was one of the results attained by this society. Father Lambert considered Mother Frances a saintly servant of God, and visited her several times on later occasions, for a holy friendship joined these two noble souls. It is due to his efforts that she was induced

to write the notices of her life; he influenced her confessor, a Franciscan Father, to command her in obedience to write them.

11. In Havre, Father Lambert introduced her to some gentlemen, zealous members of St. Vincent's Conference. She also attended a meeting of promoters of the mission church. She writes: "By a German sermon Father Lambert so edified and impressed the Sisters, that we were quite cheerful and contented. I think we should have been resigned, even if the ocean had swallowed up the ship. Father Lambert confidently predicted that we should have a safe voyage, but added that we should have much to suffer. I trust in God, and am ready for everything. Our greatest hardship will be that we shall be so long deprived of holy Mass and the sacraments. We will, however, try to obtain a share in those great graces which the Lord vouchsafes so abundantly to you. Adieu, then, dear Sisters! I thank you for your great love, which I continually experience. Let us, then, be very good, faithful to Our Lord, willingly, and for love of Him, accepting everything from His hand. Do not trouble yourselves; all will be well. Everything ordained by God is good and desirable."

12. They embarked in the evening, during a storm, in a small steamer bound for Southampton. From there they were to continue their voyage in a Bremen steamer. Two gentlemen of St. Vincent's Conference conducted them on board, gave them letters of introduction to the agent at Southampton, and expressed their regret at having to predict a bad night. — From the English port she writes: "It

was not long before Sister Afra suffered so severely from an attack of sea-sickness, that she groaned dismally, and thought she must die. Sister Norberta seconded her, but more mildly. Soon I too felt that I should not escape. All, all for the greater glory of God, and for the relief of the souls in purgatory! — It is my turn. All three of us are very sick. We feel as if we were dying."

13. Next morning at ten o'clock they landed at Southampton. They were informed that the German steamer would not leave port before the afternoon of next day. An agent conducted them to a neighboring hotel, where their habit caused considerable comment. Presently, a gentleman advanced, and addressing them in French, counselled them to leave that irreligious house, and offered to furnish them lodging with two pious Catholic ladies. The dawning mistrust of Mother Frances soon gave way to gratitude, when he proved to be the Catholic priest of the city. He conducted them to a house near the Catholic church, where they were kindly received by two affectionate elderly ladies. — The good priest had heard of the arrival of the Sisters, and had hastened to be of assistance to them. Mother Frances was the more rejoiced, because she had been under the impression that there was no Catholic church in that seaport.

She writes: "I told him: 'You are our angel Raphael, and more.' To-morrow at eight o'clock we shall attend Mass and receive holy Communion. We were able to pray fervently in the church. After a delightful rest (we awoke as late as seven o'clock), we went to church, where we remained

till after nine. We assisted at Mass, and received holy Communion. I need not tell you what sentiments of gratitude towards Our Divine Redeemer filled our hearts for granting us this greatest of graces here, where we least expected it. Never did I recite the *Magnificat* with so much devotion. We also thanked our holy patrons, especially dear St. Anthony, for guiding us so wonderfully. Now we confidently entrust ourselves to the ocean. This creature of God will give us opportunity to suffer, but it is by God's permission. If we had not sinned in Adam, and personally, it could not harm us; we should only feel its pleasures. Magnificent and sublime as the ocean presents itself, the impressions it causes are grand, viewed both from its dark and from its bright side. It must be so, because it is so ordained by God. Oh, how one learns on the ocean to say the *Salve Regina* from the inmost soul! Never was I able to say it as during that night.— To-day there is again a strong wind. Very likely we shall be ill again in consequence of the violent rocking of the ship; but we are prepared. This morning we abandoned ourselves entirely to Our Dear Saviour, and offered up our sufferings for His glory, for the welfare of our Congregation, for the salvation of all, as the charity of Our Lord demands; also, for the relief of the poor souls. Farewell now, dear, good Sisters! If you fare as well as we, we may congratulate ourselves. I send you most loving regards, and with all my heart I implore for you the peace and blessing of Our Lord." — "Now you have sufficient topics for discussion during recreation; but if

Sister N. should relate our adventures, she would provoke you to laughter."

14. The first week of the voyage was very disagreeable on account of the rainy, stormy weather. But, as the Sister alluded to above, writes, the venerable Mother, though she suffered most of all, forgot her own sufferings, and encouraged the Sisters to offer up all for the love of God, in a spirit of penance, and for the relief of the poor souls. On Tuesday, June 16th, when, with the improvement of the weather, the Sisters felt better, Mother Frances wrote: "Cordial greeting in the Lord from a great, great distance. Thanks to God, to our dear Mother Mary, and to St. Anthony, whose intercession you have so frequently invoked, I am able to inform you to-day that we are all well. But we had to suffer greatly during these days. Personal experience alone will enable you to comprehend it. Until to-day, the weather was stormy, and most of the passengers were ill, except Sister Pica. . . . We abstained from food from Wednesday till Sunday. I was not able to drink anything, even the smell of coffee was nauseating. Sister Pica was overjoyed when she finally succeeded in preparing a dish of potatoes which we were able to partake of. Long before we started on the voyage she had prayed that at least one Sister might remain well to nurse Mother and the others, and had added: 'Let this undeserved grace be mine.' . . . The narrow gloomy state-room with its coffin-like bed is truly repulsive to nature. It is an act of self-denial every evening to make use of it, and the nights are very fatiguing. Therefore morning is hailed with delight, and everybody goes on deck as early as possible."

Mother Frances writes:

"*Wednesday: On deck, the ship rocking violently.* We feel better every day. The greatest hardships seem to be over. On the Tuesday after his feast, St. Anthony came to our relief. In thanksgiving, I said the *Te Deum* with the Sisters." Her notes of Thursday inform us of more stormy weather, a fatiguing night, and nausea. She remarks: "Verily, this is an experience well calculated to humble us and to make us feel our nothingness. We acknowledge it, and seek to profit thereby. I get to dreaming as soon as I fall asleep, and in my dreams I am with you, dear Sisters, with the whole community, and with each one individually. I often remember the dear sick Sisters. Tell dear Sister Suitberta not to be in haste: nevertheless, as God wills it. I dreamt that another young Sister had received the last sacraments, but could not distinguish who she was. — When you receive these lines, give thanks to Our Dear Lord for our arrival. I shall mail this letter in New York, immediately after landing."

"*Monday Morning.* A beautiful day yesterday. We celebrated Sunday in our own way, prayed much, and sang some hymns to the Blessed Virgin and the *Te Deum* back of the steersman's cabin. We hope to land on Tuesday. We invoke St. Anthony and St. John the Baptist, that we may have the grace to receive holy Communion on Wednesday, the feast of St. John. With the help of God's grace we were good, so that we need not go to confession. Continue to pray for us, dear Sisters, especially for the intention that our visit to America may be for the greater glory of God, and according to His holy will."

"*June 24th.* Thanks be to God, we are landing, landing! We salute in spirit, in America, Our Divine Redeemer in the Blessed Sacrament, our dear Mother, the Blessed Virgin, our holy Father, St. Francis, St. Anthony, St. John the Baptist, St. Raphael and all our holy patrons."

15. On their arrival Sister Felicitas, the Provincial Superioress and a few other Sisters received the travelling party. The Sister's journal cited above remarks: "The joy was greater than our poor hearts could hold. Though these happy moments and blissful emotions made an indelible impression on the soul, they can not be described. Our dear Mother and all the Sisters wept. Sister Felicitas was deathly pale, and trembling, she could only repeat: 'Mother, dear Mother!' Soon we were in our branch house in Hoboken, where it was our privilege once more to kneel before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, how happy, how supremely happy was this moment!"

16. After all, there is an affection not originating in flesh and blood, not resulting from purely natural inclination; a love which is a sacred union of souls in God, which even death can not sever. The source of this love is on high; for "charity is of God", and "God is charity." (I John IV. 7, 8.) By self-love hearts are debased in themselves and separated from one another, by charity and love of God they are elevated and united. This sacred love, originating in God and leading to Him is praised by the Psalmist, saying: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Ps. CXXXII. 1.)

CHAPTER XVI.

In America.

1. Immediately after her arrival in America, Mother Frances began to devote herself to her duties. The Sisters implored her in vain to spare herself on account of the sultry weather. The Sister alluded to before writes: "She desires to be high up in heaven, next to our holy Father, St. Francis; therefore she is anxious not to lose a moment of time, nor to use it improperly."

2. In her first letter from America, Mother Frances says: "We have solid ground under our feet again, yet there is a sensation as if it were giving way. We are very happy in the midst of our Sisters, assisting at holy Mass, and receiving holy Communion. The sufferings and trials of the voyage are forgotten; our remembrances are sweet ones. As early as this evening of the 24th, we start for Cincinnati. The train leaves at five o'clock. We shall have to ride two nights and a day before we arrive on Friday morning, in time for Mass. We are very grateful to St. Anthony who, since that Tuesday on the ship, has guided us well. . . . When travelling, a person is less distracted than on other occasions. I am busily engaged in trying to learn English. French is of great service to me here. Above all, I implore the Sisters not to cease praying for us; for we are in great need of God's help now. . . . After having remembered you in all my prayers, I am content and without solicitude. . . . Sister Felicitas will accompany me."

3. Quite exhausted with the fatigue of travel,

she arrived at the Provincial House in Cincinnati on the 26th of June, but nevertheless assisted at Mass and received holy Communion. It is impossible to describe the joy occasioned by her arrival. After a short rest, she joined the Sisters in the noon recreation, and on the following day began her visitation, starting with the recluses. "How happy I was in their midst," she writes. "One feels that the spirit of our holy Father, St. Francis, and the virtue of our beloved Mother, St. Clare, pervades the convent. The sacred tranquillity dwelling here recalls the presence of Our Dear Lord, Who from the tabernacle blesses the labors of the Sisters and assists them to be united with Him wherever they may be occupied in the house. Silence is observed so religiously that one does not hear the least noise from morning till night; at the same time the Sisters fulfil their various duties with the greatest punctuality and recollection."

4. In a letter, dated Teutopolis, Illinois, July 6th, she mentions that she had gone to Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the 2d, with Sister Felicitas, to arrange for the foundation of a house at Hesse Cassel. "We rode nine hours on the railroad, then two hours in a country wagon on roads so bad that we continually invoked our guardian angel. The pious missionary of the place, a German doctor of divinity, acted as driver, and brought us back to Fort Wayne the next day, where we were most kindly received by the Sisters of Providence. At midnight we started for Teutopolis, where we have a branch house. Bishop Juncker, whom I had met

at Munich, had persistently urged its foundation. We rode in the railroad cars till five in the evening and then a two hours' journey in a rattling cart over a non-descript road was yet before us. Once our driver called out: "Hold on fast, so as not to fall out. Here is a bad place. Last year one of my boys fell out here and broke his arm." We Sisters, and two other passengers, each sat on a chair. But finally I preferred to take my place on the bottom of our vehicle, because the chairs were jostled about so roughly. At seven in the evening we arrived at Teutopolis.... A novice, Sister Xaveria, was dangerously ill with typhoid fever. She had anxiously yearned for my presence. After saluting Our Saviour in the chapel, I went to her.

"Though she was delirious, she left her bed when I entered, fell on her knees and regarded me with an angelic expression. Her folded hands indicated that she implored my blessing. I was moved to tears. She soon became conscious. The bishop had the kindness to visit the dying Sister in the morning. He said three Our Fathers with us, and then went to give confirmation in church. He also sang High Mass and preached. I remained with the sick Sister, who rendered her dear soul to God without visible agony about eleven o'clock that same morning. From the beginning of her illness she had a presentiment that she would die, and had willingly offered her young life to God.

"The bishop desires our assistance in so many ways, and for so many places of his diocese, that I must be very cautious not to grant too much from compassion. Every day, I pray with the Sisters

for light, guidance and strength. The *Veni Creator* has become my favorite prayer, especially here in America. I was moved to say it during my journey with great confidence. I am well. Heat and exhaustion must not concern one here. Perspiration trickles down my face like tears. I abstain from cooling drinks, and rather take a cup of tea or coffee, and thus stand the heat better. The nights are worst; perspiration hinders a person from sleeping."

5. On the 7th of July she returned to Cincinnati, arriving there on the 8th. On the 11th she wrote: "I am very well, and ascribe it to your prayers; but sometimes I feel quite fatigued. Before being acclimatized, a person has to suffer much here in summer. If one could enjoy undisturbed sleep, it would be easier; but that is not to be thought of. However, even if one does feel unwell in the morning, you feel better by and by after rising resolutely. In choir, you are of course still half dazed, and it is a relief, bodily and mentally, to assist quietly at Mass. During the night, thirst is an unwelcome visitor, and a cup of coffee at seven o'clock is relished. On the ocean, my chest was quite free; here it is rather obstructed, but otherwise I am well and fresh. I thought to give you a detailed account of my health in order to fulfil the promise I made you."

6. "*Cincinnati, July 11th.* Yesterday, at last, I received your dear, long expected letter, which pleased me greatly. It mentions slight illnesses of some of the Sisters, but informs me that everything in the mother-house is going on well, and that all

the Sisters are trying to be very good. Thanks to the Lord, and to you also, dear Sisters, for you relieve and rejoice me exceedingly thereby. I now proceed with renewed courage, and feel the hardships and fatigues, which are not a few here, only by halves."

On the 14th of July she writes to Sister Paula, that on that day, the feast of St. Bonaventure, a number of novices had been admitted to profession. To her great exhaustion she had conducted the retreat herself. She adds: "Dear St. Bonaventure sent us novices for profession. During the whole day he permitted us to experience his presence, so that we were all, so to say, buoyed up with happiness. The community was pervaded by so cheerful, blissful a spirit, that we had a foretaste of heaven. Altogether, the Sisters here are very single-hearted and childlike. From the oldest down to the youngest, they are all devoted and self-sacrificing. They have great love for each other, to my special joy and consolation. They are one heart and one soul. One novice, alas, has to be dismissed to-day. Thus there are always bitter pills to swallow; but when it is the will of God it must be done resolutely and courageously."

7. During the sojourn of Mother Frances in the United States the war between the North and South was at its height. She refers to it in several of her letters, to quiet the apprehensions of the Sisters. Thus she writes, on the 15th of July, to Sister Joanna: "You would not feel at home here on account of the tremendous war clamor. The stores are closed; the men are drilling and shooting all

day long. The enemy's troops are manoeuvering within fifty to sixty miles of the city, and some time ago had advanced even closer, when the archbishop requested the prayers of our recluses. They try to comply with great earnestness, in which I confirmed them. And the good, pious archbishop ascribes it to their prayers that the city was spared. We have not the least fear. So reckless a spirit predominates here, that one makes light of everything." On the 17th of July she adds: "Great excitement and ceaseless drumming in the city. The enemy is approaching. Here and there the railroads are torn up, and connections are impossible. When, a few days ago, a thick cloud of dust arose, the enemy was thought to be advancing. Anxiety turned into general merriment, when the cause of the dust became known: a large drove of mules were driven to Cincinnati to be employed in the war."

8. In the same letter she urges Sister Bernardine to work for the propagation of St. Joseph's Society. "It is a truly good work to assist the poor, abandoned Germans in the great seaport town (Havre)." She moreover confesses that she is overwhelmed with work, and adds the following characteristic words: "Surely I should not get through, if I had not the special assistance of God, which I ascribe to your prayers. Continue to pray devoutly without ceasing, for there is need of it. . . . I am well, and everything prospers. Courage, then, and onward! Prayer and sacrifice!"

We cite the following passage from a letter to a convert very dear to her: "I visited all the sick in

the great hospital. Most of them are Germans. I was greatly delighted to be able to speak to them. Oh, how necessary the exercise of charity is in this country! One must have experienced it to believe it. Here is the place to aid the poor souls by corporal words of mercy. The poor, poor people in their abandoned state are very well disposed for grace, and docile as children. Many, many souls are saved; thanks to the Lord! It is an effect of His mercy. As to the rest, there is here a love of ease and independence, and a licentiousness of which we have no conception."

9. Reassuring remarks on her health, exhortations to prayer and to gratitude are repeated in many other letters. Interspersed, we find inquiries about individual Sisters, especially the sick. From one of these letters, of July 24th, we gather that she suffered a slight attack of cholera morbus, "a fashionable sickness here," as she remarks. On the 25th of July she writes: "It was only during recreation that I had the consolation of your communications. Thanks to you, dear Sisters, for the many prayers you continually say for me, and for the great charity you evince thereby, and also by your sacrifices. They are a sweet incense ascending to the Lord, and moreover having the effect of wondrously comforting the poor human heart. I am edified at the zeal of good Sister Petronella. I hope Our Dear Lord will grant me the consolation of finding her and the other dear sick Sisters still alive on my return. But as the Lord ordains: if He should call one of you, depart in peace."

10. In the beginning of August, after announcing to her Assistant, Sister Paula, that she intended to set out on her return towards the end of the month, she writes, on the 7th, that difficulties had arisen which would delay her departure. But on the 14th she informs her of the happy solution of these difficulties in the following memorable words: "On the feast of St. Clare (August 12th), Our Dear Lord heard the many prayers sent up to Him, and gave me light and knowledge how to act. I had been greatly troubled, because the Lord had delayed to guide me. But when the difficulty was at its height, and I had already renounced my desire of returning to Europe in September, He came to my aid in His great mercy, and clearly showed me the way out of my troubles. Thank Our Dear Lord with me, and continue in prayer, for thereby I receive the strength to co-operate with grace even in difficulties, and to fulfil the adorable will of God. Remember Moses, who had to keep his arms extended;" etc.

11. On the 8th of August she again went to Fort Wayne, to assist at the opening of the branch house in Hesse Cassel, and at the vesting of novices by the bishop. On the 29th she was in New York, and embarked, without an attendant, for Havre. Thence she writes what a shock the unexpected death of Sister Engelberta had caused her, and announced that she intended to arrive at home on the 14th of September. The Sisters were grieved that the venerable Mother travelled alone. Her brother, Mr. Henry Schervier, hastened to Havre, and Sister Joanna, one of her Assistants, went to

Verviers to meet her. The news of her arrival rapidly spread, and many of her friends assembled at the mother-house to greet her. The Sisters awaited her arrival in church. She came shortly after four o'clock in the afternoon, entered the church at once, the door being closed quickly after her. Then the joyful strains of the *Te Deum*, accompanied by the harmonies of a new organ, the gift of the father of one of the Sisters, resounded, and the venerable Mother's features expressed great emotion and supreme happiness. After the hymn, she knelt and said a prayer of thanksgiving, saluted the Sisters with a few affectionate words, and retired into the house. Here she was soon surrounded by her friends, gentlemen and ladies, and the intention of the Sisters of permitting her to rest after the fatigues of the journey could not be realized. It was only at supper that she could cheer the Sisters by her presence amongst them. They wondered that she had not noticed the music of the new organ, an indication that her mind had dwelt elsewhere. After supper she visited the sick Sisters to give them an opportunity to share in the rejoicings of the day.

12. Souls not seeking earthly pleasures for themselves, but sacrificing themselves entirely for the love of God and the neighbor, are enabled in a special manner to spread about them and to diffuse into wide circles the peace and cheerfulness which they draw from the Holy Spirit. The bitterness accumulated by a selfish person in his interior often extends to his surroundings, and he becomes, in the same measure as he desires to live only for

his own pleasure, a tormentor to his fellowmen. The further men remove themselves from God and Christ, the more do they convert earth into hell. On the other hand, paradise lost might be in a great measure regained, if all, or nearly all, were of one mind, and lived like the saints, or like the venerable servant of God, Mother Frances.

CHAPTER XVII.

Services of the Sisters during the war against Denmark, 1864. — A Branch House in Flensburg. — Three other new Establishments.

1. On account of the disputed possession of Schleswig-Holstein, war was declared by Prussia against Denmark during the winter of 1864. The German Knights of Malta requested Mother Frances to send some Sisters to the seat of war to act as nurses in the military infirmaries. They promised to defray the expenses, and the Rev. Canon, Count Spee, who personally conducted the negotiations with Mother Frances, signified his willingness to accompany the Sisters and to give them the necessary spiritual aid. Queen Augusta seconded the request, and finally the venerable Mother, at first reluctant to give her consent on account of the many dangers threatening the Sisters, acquiesced. The Sisters departed for the seat of war on the 13th of February. Mother Frances had resolved to install them in their new charge. On the invitation of the queen she departed for Berlin, accompanied by Sisters Tabitha and Gorgonia, whilst the rest of the

Sisters, with Sister Raphaela as Superioress, proceeded with Canon Spee directly to Hamburg, where they were to await the arrival of Mother Frances. Every Sister had to take some knitting along with which to occupy herself during the journey on the railway, to indicate that they were poor, and had to make good use of their time.

2. In Berlin, the Borromean Sisters received Mother Frances with great affection and veneration. She wrote to the mother-house: "The queen was exceedingly gracious. She visited us and treated us with great affability. This afternoon she sent Miss Von Hagen to pay for the blankets. She also gave us one hundred thalers for the wounded, to be used at our discretion, to which she added a few gold pieces, 'that the Franciscan nuns might be able to give something on the way', she remarked. This evening she sent countess Hacke to us with some lint, which the queen herself, and the king, had scraped. It was not much, but a great amount of fine compresses and bandages was added. The minister of war has assigned us to the third field hospital near the seat of war, at Rendsburg." She extols the Borromean Sisters for their energetic activity; one band had already gone to Rendsburg. Then she continues: "The good Sisters called our attention to the great sacrifices we should have to make concerning our religious exercises; but they themselves were rejoiced that they were privileged to become victims of the love of God and His poor, suffering brethren. We also shall strive to do everything in holy love, regarding Our Saviour in our poor, suffering brethren. Now, dear Sisters, I rely

on your prayers and on your daily little sacrifices. You will now pray oftener and longer than we, but I hope that Our Dear Lord will take our intention of serving Him for prayer. Occasions of serving Him will certainly not be wanting. We are to depart for Hamburg this evening, where we are to stop at a hotel and meet the Sisters."

3. The three Sisters arrived at Hamburg late at night. One of them relates that the venerable Mother was quite exhausted; for the journey had been made in overcrowded third class cars, so that the Sisters scarcely found seats. Nevertheless, next morning at three o'clock she rose to assist at Mass, celebrated by Canon Spee. Neither the early hour, nor the rain storm deterred her from walking the considerable distance to the church. In Rendsburg their reception was rather cold. They found neither a dwelling for themselves, nor a hospital in which to begin their duties, but were sent, some to Schleswig, some to Flensburg.

4. On bits of paper, Mother Frances wrote from Flensburg to the mother-house: "Yesterday I went with count Galen all through Flensburg to find an abode for the Sisters. As yet, the hospitals are in a sad condition. There is scarcely room for the wounded, much less for the nurses. We remained half a day in a Prussian hospital, in a large room full of wounded soldiers, whose beds were the only place where we could sit to rest after our fatiguing tour of exploration. The good Sisters of Mercy that nurse the Prussian soldiers are in the same predicament. Their lodgings are ill furnished, and so narrow that they are scarcely able to move. The

Austrian hospital is greatly in need of nurses; but there is no room for them, and a lack of accommodations generally. At last, after many failures, we succeeded in renting a room in the neighborhood, from which we go out to the sick. To-day, count Galen took two of our Sisters to Schleswig, where we are to have five Sisters in all to minister to wounded Austrians, and so we are divided into two parties. There are also many Sisters of other communities engaged here. We are to be assigned to a hospital in a large castle (Gottorf), on the outskirts of the city. The excellent Austrian commander, a polite, religious gentleman, at first quartered the Sisters in the city, but afterwards removed them to the hospital. I pity the poor Austrians with all my heart. When I first came to the hospital at Rendsburg, I had to weep; there were so many badly wounded patients there. Among them are really good and simple-hearted people. With them, one feels he is with Catholics. The country about here is all Protestant: what a difference between it and ours! To-day we had Mass for the first time. A small chamber of the Borromean Sisters was prepared for the purpose: four Borromeans and we twelve assisted at the holy sacrifice. It was very affecting. It seemed to me that the divine blessing must descend on the stricken city in consequence. You have no idea of the existing condition. I write these lines in great haste, and in a cold room. Here we have constant opportunity to practise interior and exterior self-denial and mortification. But we are in good spirits. Last night we slept on straw, on the floor.

When the young Sisters awoke once in a while, they laughed. I am quite at ease in the midst of the Sisters; we have everything in common. By and by more means for the nursing of the wounded are becoming available. Things were very poorly in this regard at first. You will notice by these indications that you must be very good, and persevere in prayer." The letter further mentions that she furnished various articles, especially pillows, to the patients, for which she paid with her own means.

5. This account of their suffering is confirmed by letters, and later by oral communications of the Sisters. All agree that the venerable Mother cheerfully shared their privations, thanked God for them, and praised Him for having vouchsafed them the grace of partaking of the poverty of Christ. In the hospital at Flensburg they were soon provided with all necessaries. There they also had the great consolation of assisting at Mass and receiving holy Communion on the Sunday after their arrival. But Canon Spee, their chaplain, soon fell ill with a dangerous carbuncle. The Sisters were overwhelmed with work, and Mother Frances herself nursed him. In order to do so, she had to go six times a day in the bitter cold through the snow from the hospital to the hotel where he had taken apartments.

6. In Flensburg, Mother Frances performed an act of humility which is related by several Sisters, and which greatly edified them all. It was mentioned before that the red cross on the Sisters scapular is permitted to be worn only by such as

have pronounced perpetual vows. Mother Frances one day gave hers to Sister Tabitha, wearing in return the young Sister's scapular, which was without this badge of distinction, till she came back to Aix la Chapelle.

7. In a letter of February 22d, 1864, she writes: "Could you but see our wounded and assist in our ministrations in the hospital, you would be rejoiced at the work. Besides our infirmary at castle Gottorf, there are eight others here and in the neighborhood. Just now a few Austrian gentlemen were here and thanked us for our care of the wounded. I can not but speak in flattering terms of their sincerity and good will. We have patients here that have to be fed like children. They suffer a napkin to be placed before them and open their mouths like infants to receive the spoon. Of these there is a large number. Many of them are quite eager for pious medals, and have us sew them to their clothes, so as not to lose them. It is a pity that we have so little Catholic reading-matter for them. Protestant tracts are sent in abundance."

Later she writes: "To-morrow, Sunday, we shall have the great privilege of assisting at holy Mass and receiving holy Communion. There is no Catholic church either here, or in Schleswig or Rendsburg, and we cannot visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. But in spirit we transfer ourselves even as far as St. Clare in Aix la Chapelle. I reserve the account of many ludicrous incidents and strange happenings for our recreations after my return."

8. Affairs were soon in good shape, and she wrote pleasantly: "We have become quite different

from what we used to be — so to say, military. We have courage as never before, and, I should say, an easy, but nevertheless a good conscience. The Sisters are all good. We can not take our meals in common, but only two and two. Presently the commander, or some officer, or this and that illustrious noble will enter the room. Everything is free and easy here, and under the prevailing conditions can not be otherwise. As soon as Canon Spee shall have recovered, I shall return. — How are our dear sick Sisters? I greatly miss tidings from you."

9. Two weeks later, Mother Frances returned home, and sent several more Sisters to assist the others. By and by, nineteen Sisters were employed in the various infirmaries, and soon won the confidence and respect not only of the patients and physicians, but even of the highest officers of the army. The emperor and empress of Austria sent, through their ambassador in Berlin, a document to Sister Raphaela, praising the Sisters' patriotic zeal, together with a beautiful chalice, in acknowledgment of their services as nurses of the Austrian troops.

10. Mother Frances felt compelled to caution the Sisters against overwork. In June, 1864, she writes: "Care must be taken that the Sisters are not exhausted physically and spiritually. To remain three weeks without spiritual aid is too long. Both nurses and patients must have spiritual succor." In fact, all the Sisters returned in a state of great exhaustion from their duties in the field, and more than one had ruined her health for life.

This was especially the case with Sister Cypriana, a most practical, courageous and devoted nurse, for whom the soldiers entertained the highest regard. She overtaxed her strength by excessive night watches, became sick herself, and had to be recalled. For a time, she seemed to recover, but soon became a confirmed invalid. As such, she edified all by her patience, charity and resignation. She died on Easter Sunday, 1868.

11. Unawares, the services of the Sisters in Schleswig-Holstein prepared the way for a branch house, and for a church and priest for the few Catholics in the Protestant town of Flensburg, and in the vicinity. It came to pass in this wise. Most of the military infirmaries had been closed at the end of the war, and the other religious communities had recalled their Sisters. A small number of patients had remained in Flensburg, and six Sisters were left there to attend to their wants. The inhabitants had laid aside their prejudices, and became more and more attached to the Sisters. Several Protestants had asked for, and obtained Sisters as nurses during illness. Service was regularly held for the Catholic soldiers, at which the Catholics of the town and neighborhood assisted, and thus formed the nucleus of a congregation. The question was mooted whether a missionary station might not be established at the place. The presence of the Sisters was regarded as paramount in this matter; therefore the neighboring priests, especially the missionaries Rave and Lueders, insisted that they remain. Sister Raphaela herself, and even some Protestants, were in favor of the

plan. Mother Frances writes, on the 13th of June, that for herself, she desired the Sisters to return; but she continues: "I can not, do not, and shall not desire your return before your work is finished. But I have opposed the foundation of a branch house in Flensburg when there was talk about one, because other communities, for instance the Borromeans, would be better suited for the purpose, as they have schools besides serving the sick, and are in general more clever and experienced than we. Therefore, remain quietly at your post and observe what God shall ordain. Only, no interference with the guidance of Providence! For instance, even if I should have declared ten times that I did not desire a branch house in Flensburg, as soon as I should become convinced that it was the will of God that one should be established there, I would immediately reverse my decision."

12. The time soon arrived, when Mother Frances did reverse her decision, because she recognized that the execution of the plan was the will of God. Bishop Paul Melchers of Osnabrück, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern Missions, and now Cardinal, perceived that the establishment of a Catholic congregation and church in Flensburg could scarcely be realized if the Sisters departed. He therefore made the establishment of a branch house the condition of the foundation of the congregation. Where so many great interests of the church were at stake, all other considerations vanished, for no sacrifice in the interest of the common good was too great for Mother Frances.

13. Nevertheless, this establishment had to

contend with great difficulties, not only in the beginning, but for many years. At first, it seemed well-nigh impossible to find a dwelling for the Sisters and a house for a small hospital. Finally Sister Raphaela succeeded in finding a rather small and dilapidated one, to which she removed with a few patients in September. Then the government prohibited Mass to be said there, because Catholic services had been permitted hitherto only on account of the presence of the troops. Sister Raphaela had recourse to queen Augusta, through whose influence the prohibition was withdrawn. The later history of this establishment, interesting as it is, does not belong here; suffice it to say, that the Sisters now have a large hospital in Flensburg, and enlist the sympathy of the community to a high degree.

14. Two other branch houses were established during 1864, both of which developed into important establishments: on the 23d of September, at Kalk, near Cologne, and on the 30th of the same month at Minden. The Sisters of both houses devote themselves especially to home nursing.

15. What is recorded in this chapter concerning the service of the wounded soldiers, relates, it is true, in no wise to achievements of historical importance; yet, who would deny that the self-sacrificing zeal and charity of these Sisters embodies a moral greatness and a nobility of character that far surpasses all the attainments of so-called heroes who revolutionized entire nations at the cost of streams of blood? True greatness of soul is not to be measured by visible effects, which are not wanting even to the forces of nature, but by interior nobility

and moral worth. Before God the external work of charity attains its full value when it is inspired by love, without which man is but "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (I Cor. 13, 1.) On the contrary, in the balance of God the mite of the poor widow is of greater value than the gold of the wealthy. "He is truly great, who is great in charity." (Imit. of Christ, I. 3, 6.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

Dangerous Illness of Mother Frances. — Publication of the Constitutions. — Encouragement of the German Mission in Havre.—Smallpox and Cholera patients. — Service in the War of 1866.

1. In February, 1865, Mother Frances was prostrated by a painful attack of asthma, which stubbornly resisted all the efforts of the physicians. The continual pressure, day and night, and the difficulty with which she took nourishment, made her condition a critical one. On the feast of the Annunciation, March 25th, she expressed a desire of receiving Extreme Unction, if the physician, her cousin, Dr. Schervier, would pronounce her illness serious enough to warrant it. He assented, and as soon as she had been anointed, her health improved. She was able to breathe more freely, and to take the refreshments ordered by the physician; but a very dangerous prostration remained. On the 7th of April, when twenty-one postulants received the habit, the physician permitted her only to see the newly vested in her room for a moment. As soon as she was able the physicians ordered her to quit the mother-house for a time.

First, she went to the branch house in Burtscheid, later to the one in Coblenz. There queen Augusta visited her "dear little mother," as she called her, when she came to that city on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the union of the Rhine provinces with Prussia. It was a great effort for Mother Frances to receive the august Lady at the head of her daughters. For a long time her weakness and nervousness were so great, that the least emotion caused tears to flow. In Coblenz she made a novena to St. Anthony with great confidence, and felt strong enough at its close to return to the mother-house and resume her duties.

2. About this illness, during which she also suffered greatly from interior trials, she writes, on the 11th of May, 1865, to the often mentioned Franciscan Father: "This illness was truly a visitation of God; for from Septuagesima until the close of Lent, when I received Extreme Unction, I was, as it were, in a continual agony on account of the asthma. I cannot express what I suffered mentally; I should never have thought it possible. May Our Dear Lord grant that my sufferings were borne, in a manner, according to His holy will and Heart. As a consequence of this difficulty of breathing, my throat and lungs are still ailing. I was therefore sent to Burtscheid, where I take fresh warm milk twice a day, and Emse water with milk as often as possible. As yet, I am able to sleep but little, on account of coughing and the fever. The physicians ascribe it to the previous great strain on the lungs. During the day the cough

does not trouble me. They tell me that with great care I may yet get over it, and become stronger than before. The Lord's will be done! Great as was my fear of dying during one of my asthmatic spells, I am not afraid of consumption. It gives a person opportunity to prepare for death. Since last week I am permitted to write one letter every day."

3. Mother Frances had used her experiences since the foundation of the Congregation to enlarge the sketch of the Constitutions which had been approved in 1850. In their new form, the Constitutions were submitted to the archbishop, and again received his approbation. Then they were printed and sent to the branch houses, together with a circular letter, dated "within the octave of the feast of Our Lady of Victories." In this letter the venerable Mother exhorted her daughters to strive seriously for that perfection to which they were plighted in virtue of their vows, and to live according to the spirit of St. Francis, that is, in humility and simplicity, in poverty, in exterior and interior mortification, in religious retirement, modesty and recollection. But all these virtues, she adds, must have for their complement the love of Our Dear Saviour, manifested in the exercise of humble and prompt charity, which in its turn should be sweetened and made pleasant by a true sisterly love having its root and centre in the love of Jesus, Our Divine Saviour. Then she points out the danger to fidelity in fulfilling the will of God usually resulting from the imitation of the evil example of imperfect and worldly-minded

religious. "Let us take no scandal," she writes; "let us not judge. It is not sufficient to *give* no scandal, we must also *take* none. If we are not Superiors, let us always close our eyes to the disedifying actions of others. . . . . The Lord will not judge us according to the demeanor of others, but according to our own. 'Judge not, that you may not be judged.' "

4. As the building of the emigrants' church at Havre progressed but slowly, Mother Frances had pious pictures printed, on the back of which she recommended this holy work. They were sold at a nominal price, and a considerable sum was realized for the purpose. When Father Lambert Bethmann came to Aix la Chapelle in September, she encouraged him to undertake a voyage to America to collect among his numerous countrymen there, which he did with notable success.

About this time the Provincial Superioress of the house in America came to Aix la Chapelle. When ready, with seven Sisters and two postulants, to return, it was welcome news to her to hear that Father Lambert would accompany her to America. The voyage was a very stormy one. Not only the passengers, but also the sailors several times gave themselves up for lost. In this extremity Father Lambert proved a true friend not only of the Sisters, but of all on board. He cheered and consoled the hopeless, prayed with them, and not a few were reconciled to God by a good confession, the first in many years. Long after, some of them expressed their gratitude for the services of this good priest, and ascribed the safety of the ship to his prayer.

They landed in the port of New York, after a tedious voyage, on the 1st of January, 1866.

5. During the spring of 1866, smallpox became epidemic in Aix la Chapelle. The city authorities established a hospital for patients of this kind in the old Dominican building. The Sisters were given charge of the female department, and of the household. Alexian Brothers had charge of the male patients. The epidemic lasted two years, during which time the Sisters remained at their post.

6. In June, 1866, Prussia and her allies declared war against Austria. The Sisters of Mother Frances were again called upon, and began their ministrations at Langensalza, where four hundred wounded soldiers were in two infirmaries. In the beginning of July, Mother Frances wrote: "Continually, day and night, we are receiving telegrams urging us to send Sisters. Twenty-seven are now engaged in nursing the wounded." On the 6th of July she sent eight more to Hesse Cassel, where five hundred wounded longed for their ministrations. Mother Frances was greatly distressed at this fratricidal war, and its immediate consequence, the spread of cholera. She writes: "It seems that God intends to purify the world all around. Let us strike our breasts and confess that we have sinned, and then humbly submit to the chastening hand of God. If we strive to be very faithful, we may hope that the word of God will be verified in us: 'To them that love God all things work together unto good.' (Rom. VIII. 28.) Let us be very faithful to the Lord, as his spiritual militia, in life and death. All for Him!" The same sentiments are expressed in other letters.

7. After the Sisters had begun their ministrations in Langensalza, Mother Frances sent them a little prayer which she had composed herself, requesting them to say it every day, and to add three Hail Marys. We give it as an admirable expression of her sentiments: "'Put me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm: for love is strong as death.' (Cant. VIII. 6.) Grant me, O Lord, to adhere to Thee in constant fidelity, and to serve Thee in holy enthusiasm and self-abnegation. Then I shall truly militate under Thy standard, decorated with the sign of Thy sacred Cross, which, by the unction of Thy grace, may also bless our suffering brethren. Amen."

8. The appearance of cholera added to the horrors of war, and new burdens were imposed on the Sisters, in a measure too, that not a few of them, victims of over-exertion, fell ill, and some died. The scourge appeared in the vicinity of Luxemburg as early as May. The bishop, Mgr. Adames, applied to Mother Frances for Sisters. She sent two to the village of Gestingen, who remained until the epidemic ceased there, and then continued their ministrations in the neighboring villages till October. Mother Frances, in several letters, instructs the Sisters and warns them not to forget to disinfect their dress after leaving one house before entering another. She moreover exhorts them to render their ministrations meritorious by serving Our Lord and His dear Mother in the sick, and then adds: "Do not trouble yourself, dear Sister, concerning the inability of saying all your prayers. Everything you do with a pure intention in the

service of God, is true prayer, the best prayer. Our good Lord does not demand impossibilities, and charity, true charity, is above all else. Therefore, be not narrow-minded. To be faithful in the practice of religious exercises is praiseworthy, is necessary; but under the circumstances active charity in the service of Our Lord is our first duty. All for Him, Our Lord and Master! . . . . As religious, we belong in the convent; when the exercise of our vocation demands otherwise in exceptional cases, we are justified in leaving it; but not for other reasons. And as soon as our ministrations can be dispensed with, we must hasten to return to the mother-house, in humility, and without claiming a reward. If you are urged to accept an alms, you may humbly do so, to provide for the expenses of travel, etc. For the rest, let me remind you that we must regard it as a grace to have been permitted to minister there. If that gentleman . . . . desires to give you a few dozens of pictures, I shall be very grateful; but do not ask them for each Sister. This would be bold, and therefore against the spirit of our holy Father, St. Francis."

9. The cholera continued its ravages after the close of the war. Infirmaries were established at various places and the Sisters sent there as nurses; thus, for instance, to Eschweiler, Stolberg, Burtscheid and Coblenz. The mayor of Steele called at the mother-house on the 29th of August, and applied for nurses. Four Sisters were sent, and ministered to the sick in their homes. Three hundred died within seven weeks. Six Sisters

were engaged in the charitable work at Wattenscheid, Hegemannsdorf and among the miners of the coaling station "Zollverein." The scourge attacked two of the Sisters. They were sent to the branch house at Essen; one of them recovered, the other, Sister Baptista Vincenti, died at Aix la Chapelle, on the 22d of September, about twelve hours after the attack. A novice, she had willingly offered to go, when asked by Mother Frances if she were ready to expose her life to the dangers of the service. Then the venerable Mother permitted her to pronounce her first vows, and she proceeded on her errand of charity with an ardor that justifies us in applying to her the words of Scripture, "He that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matth. XIV. 20.)

10. In Aix la Chapelle the epidemic spread so rapidly, that the old Dominican building was again put in order for the reception of patients. On the 19th of September Alexian Brothers, and the Sisters, entered on their duties there. Mother Frances herself assisted her daughters in their ministrations. She performed the most menial services for the sick, and assisted the dying by prayer and pious ejaculations. She knew no fear, but rather felt in the right place amid all the misery and danger surrounding her. On account of the great amount of work to be attended to, she had at first directed the Sisters to say only part of the office prescribed by the rule; but as soon as the number of patients decreased, she ordained that they should resume the saying of the entire office.

11. Love without sacrifice is spurious. The

same is true of a creed that does not acknowledge sacrifice. The Redeemer of the world, as high-priest, offered Himself as the most precious immolation on the altar of love to His Heavenly Father in everlasting sacrifice, and at the same time left this sacrifice as a legacy to His Church, the heirloom of infinite love. This sacrifice is the greatest treasure, the most abundant source of grace in, and the most conspicuous mark of His Church. From this sacrifice of Christ, enduring in the Church, springs the world-vanquishing spirit of sacrifice of all the martyrs, confessors, and virgins, in a word, of all living members of Jesus Christ. Where the sacrifice of Christ is not, there the spirit of sacrifice in man is benumbed and dies; as St. Augustine says: "Outside the Catholic Church there is no place for true sacrifice and true immolation." The sacrifice of Christ can alone practically inculcate the doctrine: "Deny thyself, for no sacrifice made for God is too great."

CHAPTER XIX.

Archbishop Melchers.—Several new Undertakings.—Death of the Provincial Superioress in America.—Second voyage to America of Mother Frances.—Her return.

1. Cardinal von Geissel, Archbishop of Cologne, died on the 8th of September, 1864. On the 8th of May, 1866, the Holy See appointed as his successor the Right Rev. Paul Melchers, Bishop of Osnabrück, well known for his zeal and virtues, and destined to undergo the severe trials of persecution and

banishment, but also to receive recognition at the hands of the Supreme Pontiff by elevation to the Cardinalate. Soon after his appointment to the See of Cologne, Archbishop Melchers, despite the war, began his visitation of the churches, but on account of the troublous times, forbade all external demonstrations. Coming to Aix la Chapelle, he also visited the church of the mother-house, and was shown through the various departments of the convent. On this occasion he became acquainted with Mother Frances and her community, and henceforth was their firm friend. He was wont to speak of the venerable Foundress in terms of the fullest recognition of her virtues and merits.

2. In January of the same year, Mother Frances had sent, at the request of the clergy of the parish, three Sisters to Opladen. Besides attending to home nursing, they were to open a manual labor school for young girls. But as there was very little employment in the former occupation, and as school work was not included in the Sisters' plan of duty, they were recalled and sent to the military infirmaries, where their help was a great relief.

At the instance of the archbishop, the Sisters opened, on the 21st of October, a house of refuge for unemployed servant girls in Cologne. This most deserving work, so necessary in our times in all large cities, met with gratifying success, not only in Cologne, but also in Aix la Chapelle and Duesseldorf. In the latter city, a large Catholic hospital was in course of erection. A committee was appointed to confer with Mother Frances about taking charge of it. After long deliberations she consented, but sent the Sisters only in 1870.

3. On the 27th of September, Mother Frances received the sad intelligence of the death of the American Provincial Superioress, Sister Dominica (Besener). This excellent and virtuous Sister died of cholera, after an illness of only a few hours. For a quarter of an hour the venerable Mother was quite unnerved by this severe and unexpected blow. She wept profusely. But soon drying her tears, she arose, saying: "It is enough. Let no one weep any longer. What God does is well done." But the great difficulty was how to fill the place of the deceased by a competent Sister, who would know how to adapt herself to the circumstances. This gave her great concern. Her counselors proposed a suitable Sister; but she replied, that much as she would like to appoint her, she dared not; it would be like sending the delicate Sister to her doom. Finally she ordered a novena to be made by the community, and then resolved to appoint her Assistant, Sister Paula Nellessen, to the duty. The new Provincial Superioress and three other Sisters embarked at Havre on the 29th of October, and arrived in New York on the 6th of November.

At the next canonical election, Pentecost 1867, all the votes again were cast for Mother Frances. Her opposition was so strong that she declined all congratulations, and accepted the office only after the arrival of the archbishop's confirmation, June 14th.

4. This year recurred the septennial pilgrimage to the Relics at Aix la Chapelle. It was observed with great pomp amid an unusually large attendance. At its close, a grand procession was organized, in

which the archbishop took part. The so-called "Great Relics", as also numerous others from all the churches of the city, were borne through the streets, and many religious communities assisted, among them Mother Frances and a great number of her Sisters. Mother Frances reverently carried a relic of her highly venerated patroness, St. Elisabeth, which had been presented to her at Erfurt, namely, a small silver cup used by the saint. She had filled it with roses and carnations, which she strewed at the archbishop's feet on his entrance into the church, in token of her respect and loyalty.

5. During the same year she was cheered by an extraordinary increase of the community. At two vestings, forty-one postulants were admitted to the novitiate, and seventy-five novices made their profession at various times. But many Sisters very dear to her died during this year, some of them in a most edifying and consoling manner. Ehrenfeld, a suburb of Aix la Chapelle, had grown from a few straggling huts to be one of the most populous districts of the city. The increase of population had brought with it more than the usual amount of destitution, temporal and spiritual, and for some years the plan had been discussed of extending a call to the Sisters of Mother Frances to take care of the sick; but there were no means to provide a dwelling for them. In the autumn of 1867 cholera broke out in the district, and several Sisters were sent there for the time of its duration. Their ministrations were so signally blessed, that the desire to retain them there was rekindled, and means were liberally forthcoming, so that a small

house for their establishment was purchased. Three Sisters were appointed to this new charge, and Mother Frances installed them on the feast of the Epiphany, 1868.

6. Mother Frances was so solicitous for the flourishing houses of the Congregation in America, that she resolved to undertake the fatiguing voyage across the ocean a second time. On Easter Sunday, April 12th, 1868, two days before her departure, she assembled the Sisters of the mother-house in the chapter-room, and addressed them in stirring words, taking her text from the farewell discourse of Our Divine Saviour (St. John XIII. 34.), and inculcating, above all, mutual charity, it being the fundamental rule of Christianity, and still more of every religious community. By its exercise they would experience in themselves the truth of the words of St. Francis: "Charity lightens all burdens and sweetens all bitterness." She concluded with the words: "Farewell now, until we happily meet again if it so please the Lord. Let us be intimately united in the Sacred Heart of Jesus by mutual prayer for one another."

Her farewell visit to the sick Sisters next day was very affecting, because several of them seemed so near death that there was no hope of their seeing her again. Especially was this the case with the good, childlike Sister Cupertina, who remarked in holy simplicity that it seemed hard to her to miss the venerable Mother's assistance at her death, but she would willingly make the sacrifice, and ask her guardian angel to give Mother notice at the moment when it took place. In fact, Mother Frances was

moved in a peculiar manner to think of this Sister at the very hour in which she died, as later information proved.

7. On Tuesday after Easter Mother Frances left for Havre, attended by two Sisters destined for America, and as far as the seaport, by Sister Vincentia, whom she appointed her deputy for the time of her absence. They embarked on the 25th of April, and landed in New York, after a rather stormy voyage, on the 6th of May.

She wrote several letters to her deputy, relating her experiences in America, but they are no longer extant. In a letter written to Sister Fidelis, a relative, she says: "If Europe has its difficulties, the crosses in America are larger and heavier. One must be more detached to get on well amid the peculiar conditions there. But heaven seemed much nearer." She wished that the Sisters might witness an American thunderstorm, "it is more than awe-inspiring." Then she continues: "Oh how the happy death of Sister Cupertina edified us! — Here in Cincinnati we have many dear little sick children, white and colored, who will soon be angels. How you would delight in nursing them! Among them you would also find a dear little Fidelis."

Her health in America was not good. She suffered from asthmatic attacks, which, as we shall be informed later, returned in Europe, and brought her to the verge of the grave.

8. In a letter written after her return to Europe to the Superioress of the recluses in Cincinnati, she thanks the latter for her fervent prayers, to which

she ascribes the special protection of God which she experienced on the ocean. "Once," she writes, "a great sailing vessel came directly into the course of our steamer. Our ship was in great danger of being seriously damaged, the other one of being totally wrecked. But God protected us; the result of the collision was only a slight damage to both ships, and a bad fright to the passengers. Later, a part of the engine broke, and we feared to be delayed a long time, but the damage was soon repaired, and after half an hour's stoppage we were able to proceed. On the very first day, my companion, Sister Serena, became sick. Though unwell myself, I induced her to go on deck towards evening, and henceforth we were both spared the terrible experience of sea-sickness."

9. At Havre, Mr. Henry Schervier, her brother, awaited her, and on the 8th of September she arrived in Aix la Chapelle. After the first great joy at being again with her daughters had subsided, the new addition to the mother-house, which had been built by her order during her absence, was a painful surprise to her. She had approved of the plans before leaving, but during their execution the Sisters feared that the building would prove too costly, and not in accord with the seraphic poverty so dear to the venerable Mother. To her great sorrow, she had to coincide with their views, and was greatly grieved that by misjudging the plans she had been led into error. At first, she intended to have the building torn down and replaced by another; but on account of the additional expenses she had to be satisfied with the removal of some

decorative work, and with having the rest finished in the plainest manner. During the following years she continued to lament this "violation of poverty," as she called it, and in the next general assembly of Superioresses she gave orders that buildings of a similar kind should not be erected.

10. During her sojourn in America, the Congregation of Mother Frances was entrusted with the management of the general infirmary and poor house in Duesseldorf, known as the "Max Joseph Institute." This spacious institute had room for from two to three hundred inmates, and hitherto had been in charge of lay nurses. Complaints about carelessness and disorder had long been of daily occurence, so that the Protestants of the city had established a private hospital for their sick and placed it in charge of deaconesses. Even some Catholics patronized it, in preference to the city infirmary, on account of the mismanagement of the latter. Meanwhile, the Catholics began the erection of St. Mary's hospital, from which originated the present great charitable institution known by that name. But its opening was delayed, and the city authorities, who had hitherto always refused the often repeated petition of the Catholics to place the Max Joseph Institute in charge of the Sisters, now made an urgent appeal to them for this very purpose. And as the spiritual authorities also desired them to accept the charge, the first Sisters were sent there on the 4th of June, and before the end of the month their number was increased to ten.

A little later, April 8th, 1869, the Congregation founded a branch house at Bielefeld, in the diocese

of Paderborn, at the urgent solicitation of the bishop, Right Rev. Dr. Conrad Martin, and a committee of Catholics.

11. On the 11th of November, 1868, the royal government in Cologne, through its representative Blum, who personally interviewed the venerable Mother on the subject, urged her to take charge of the female prisoners of that city. Protestant prejudice thwarted this plan; but the deliberations which followed the conditional refusal which Mother Frances thought herself justified in making, are so instructive, and show the promoters of the plan in so favorable a light, that we relate it at length.

Mother Frances had notified the government representative at Cologne that she would visit him to give her reasons of refusal. The same evening, she received a telegram from Coblenz, inviting her to visit the queen. Arriving in Cologne, she first consulted the archbishop on affairs of the Congregation. He then informed her of the deplorable condition of the prisoners, adding that he himself had petitioned the government to introduce the Sisters, in order to bring about a reformation, and that, on account of the opposition of the Protestant directors, he had enlisted the sympathies of queen Augusta, and by her powerful influence had succeeded in obtaining the permission of the government. Then Mother Frances visited the government representative, who was greatly in favor of the acceptance of the proposition, so that she promised to withdraw her refusal if the queen persisted in her desire that the Congregation should engage in the difficult work, and if her counselors would agree.

In Coblenz, the queen refuted the objections of Mother Frances, and persisted in her request that she should undertake the work, adding, that she had for years been occupied with the plan of improving the deplorable moral condition of prisoners, especially of females, by having them placed in charge of religious. Therefore the archbishop's plan had been quite in accord with her own. She would be glad if a beginning was made in Cologne, and hoped that success there would open the way to other prisons. Resistance to these pleas was impossible to Mother Frances, and when her counselors agreed, she declared to the government her acceptance, under certain conditions. This was on the 18th of November, 1868. At the same time she placed the matter under the protection of St. Elisabeth, and prayed fervently for this intention. Meanwhile, the plan was not adopted after all, and, under date of May 31st, 1869, the queen wrote the following beautiful letter to Mother Frances:

"My Dear Little Mother Frances: These lines are to thank you for all your faithful endeavors in furtherance of the affair that was so dear to my heart. You and I have done what we could, therefore we may calmly leave the result to God, Whose wisdom effects what is best in all things, even if we do not attain the success we thought ourselves justified in hoping for. It is His affair: let His holy will be praised in all things, even when the sacrifice is painful to us; and in this case the pain is a real one. But what did not succeed now, may succeed later. The principal point is always, to walk before God in humility and fidelity, and to await His

pleasure. Commending myself to your remembrance, I remain, with true devotedness to yourself and to your Congregation, yours, AUGUSTA."

Mother Frances, deeply moved at the queen's graciousness, replied on June 9th,1869, expressing her sentiments of fervent gratitude for the interest the queen took in her and her Congregation, and her veneration for and devotedness to the august person of her protectress.

12. On the 10th of April, 1869, the whole world celebrated with grand solemnities the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of Pope Pius IX. Mother Frances sent a beautiful address, composed by herself in French, to the Holy Father. Among other sentiments, she expressed her desire to strew his path with flowers, as a symbol of the roses blooming so wonderfully in the garden of the Church.

On the 25th of October, the archbishop made the visitation of the mother-house, and expressed his great satisfaction at the good spirit with which he found the community imbued. He ordained, on account of some delicate Sisters, a more nourishing diet, and those engaged in night-watches, or in hard work, should be dispensed from fasting. Mother Frances immediately introduced these, and a few other changes made by him. Her own constitution being greatly debilitated by her austere life and excessive work, he also exhorted her to spare herself and to be more mindful of her health.

13. Joys and sorrows, success and disappointment alternate in this world. The interior spirit, however, ought to be fixed immovably in God

without change and hesitation, gathering fruit for eternity from all things transitory. This is achieved "by being grounded in true humility, and replenished with divine charity; by seeking always purely and entirely the honor of God; by esteeming ourselves as nothing, and sincerely despising ourselves: and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others, than to be the object of their esteem." (Imit. of Christ, III. 7, 5.)

CHAPTER XX.

Severe Illness of Mother Frances.—Her cure at Lourdes.—The year 1870.—Service of the Sisters in Military Infirmaries.—Mother Frances declares her principles regarding Governmental Recognition of the Sisters' Work.—Her generous Liberality.—Ministrations of Charity.—The Papal Jubilee.

1. The attacks of asthma, to which Mother Frances had been subject periodically, and which had troubled her especially in America, returned towards the end of 1869, and greatly weakened her. She was enabled to assist at the exercises of the community only by force of her energetic will. Overtaxing her strength by remaining a long time before the Blessed Sacrament on the day of perpetual adoration, she had to take to her bed, by order of her physician, on the 20th of January, 1870. Her asthma caused her great pain. Moreover, it was joined with such a lack of appetite, that for a month she could taste nothing but water that had been poured over toasted bread. The least mental

exertion caused attacks of suffocation, especially at night. To the bodily pains were added still more severe mental sufferings, which made her strong soul now feel all the weakness of human nature. Once she confessed that she had suffered, in a degree. the agony of Our Saviour in Gethsemani, and had experienced what the darkness was which St. John of the Cross describes: she had had a taste of the torment of being forsaken by God. Added to this, her solicitude for the welfare of the Congregation was a heavy burden on her maternal heart and tender conscience, on account of her inability to perform her duties. When the writer visited the mother-house, he witnessed her severe sufferings, for she called him to her bedside to receive his priestly blessing. Asthmatic attacks were nothing new to him; nevertheless he was deeply moved at her condition, which was similar to the agony of a dying person. The entire Congregation, and a great number of other persons, implored Heaven in most fervent prayer to spare a life so dear to them. In April the asthma left her almost entirely, but she was so exhausted that her death seemed imminent. Her physician insisted on a change of climate.

2. A benefactress, Miss Alwine Kamper, of Cologne, proposed to her to seek recovery through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, by making a pilgrimage to Lourdes. She offered to accompany her, and to defray the expenses. It seemed presumption in Mother Frances to undertake so fatiguing a journey in her exhausted condition, but she had read Henri Lasserre's book on Lourdes,

and felt a strong impulse to make the pilgrimage with the intention of either regaining her health so as to be able to resume her duties, or of being relieved of them by death. In the third week of May she left the mother-house. A few Sisters accompanied her to the station; the rest did not know of her departure. At the railway station she met her companion, Miss Kamper. It was a source of great anxiety and sorrow to the Sisters that she would not permit the attendance of one of their number. They prayed the more fervently to St. Joseph, that he would take the pilgrims under his powerful patronage.

3. Miss Kamper's notes inform us that the journey was rather favorable as far as Paris; its second stage, however, from Paris to Bordeaux, was very painful to the patient. Despite her great exhaustion, she insisted on proceeding without delay to Lourdes, and arrived there on the afternoon of the third day. During the journey her condition had become so alarming, that her attendant feared she would not reach her destination alive. She had to be lifted carefully from the railway coach, and was carried to a hotel. Her asthma had returned in a most alarming degree. Once she had so violent an attack, that the by-standers thought she was dead. M. le Curé Peyramale, the celebrated pastor of Lourdes, visited her. He expressed his surprise that a religious should travel so great a distance for the prolongation of life. She informed him that in her present state she could not attend to her duties as General Superioress, and therefore desired to obtain either recovery or death. In his

abrupt way he replied: "*Guerissez!*" ("Get well!") He exhorted her to ask her health of the Blessed Virgin, adding, a sick General Superioress was good for nothing. Her confidence was greatly increased by this conversation, and she implored the Blessed Virgin either to cure her, or to permit her to die. Soon after this she was able to be carried to the grotto, and drank of the miraculous water. Immediately she felt stronger, and spiritually refreshed. From the following day on, she was able to walk to the shrine, where she remained for hours every day, filled with joy and edified at the faith and fervent prayer of the pilgrims. She took a bath in the basin filled with the cold water from the spring, and felt much improved.

She also became acquainted with the celebrated musician and convert, Herman Cohen, once an infidel Jew, and now a zealous priest and religious. Conversation with him inflamed still more the great zeal she had always felt for the conversion of the lost sheep of Israel. She also became a friend of the community to which Bernardette, the child favored with the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, belonged.

4. After about twelve days, Mother Frances was entirely well, and started on her homeward journey. Before departing, she consecrated herself and her Congregation to the Immaculate Virgin, and desired to give public expression to her gratitude in a solemn manner. In presence of a priest, she made the following threefold promise: First, to miss no opportunity of promoting devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, especially under the

title of Our Lady of Lourdes. Secondly, she would order the following prayer to be recited daily: "Holy Mary, be thou this day my Mother and the Mother of our entire Congregation. Be our Mistress, and we will be thy servants. Remain our most benign Mother, and we will be thy faithful children. Amen." Thirdly, she would never refuse assistance asked by a Jew, and would do all in her power to obtain their conversion.—She kept these promises faithfully until her death.

5. In Paris, she remained a day to visit the Daughters of Sion, a community founded by Père Ratisbonne, consisting principally of converted Jewesses. She also visited the church of Our Lady of Victories, and the celebrated cemetery Père Lachaise. She arrived safely in Aix la Chapelle, where her sudden cure caused great wonder and indescribable joy. The Sisters, and her friends considered her recovery miraculous, and Mother Frances was of the same opinion. She forthwith began to devote herself to her former employments, and was the first in the morning and the last at night at her post of duty. She observed the fasts and the other requirements of the rule most punctually, and was busily engaged all day.

6. The year 1870 is famous in history for the great events it witnessed. The Catholic, and the infidel world as well, experienced the mighty effects of the Vatican Council, and was aroused by the opposition it met with from fanatics of all kinds, and even from a small portion of Catholics, on account of the definition of Papal Infallibility. In politics, all eyes were riveted on the gigantic war

between France and Germany, which on the one hand, by a providential combination of circumstances, broke the backbone of opposition against the Council, and on the other made the Pope a captive by the usurpation of the States of the Church and the occupation of Rome. Of course, Mother Frances' sympathies were energetically and prayerfully with the Holy Father.

Meanwhile the war brought innumerable sufferings on hundreds of thousands of both nations, to relieve which demanded all the energy and means at command. As soon as the rumors of war received official confirmation, Mother Frances hastened to admit to the holy vows a number of Sisters whose profession had been postponed on account of her illness. Many postulants received the habit, and the whole community was prepared by a retreat for the trials to come.

7. The Knights of Malta were the first to engage the Sisters' services for the wounded in the military hospitals. Soon the Patriotic Ladies' Association, under the protection of queen Augusta, desired their ministrations for the same purpose in Coblenz, and after the battle of Spicherer Heights, near Saarbrücken, they were called to the soldiers' hospital at the latter place. Mother Frances soon found herself called upon for nurses from all sides, and sent Sisters to a great many places to minister to the wounded.

8. She writes, under date of October 26th, 1870, to the often-mentioned Franciscan Father: "Now is a time of prayer and sacrifice. Yesterday I was at Cologne, where thousands of French soldiers are

ill of typhus and dysentery. Their misery is beyond description. One feels that the war is a punishment by God, which, however, will be the salvation of numbers; for I think that many who would never have thought of it else, now receive the holy sacraments and die reconciled with God." In a letter of December 22d, to the same, she says: "May the Prince of peace grant us the plenitude of His supernatural tranquility: may he reconcile the civil powers, especially in favor of the Holy Father! —What a dreadful time we are having here! It seems as if the evil spirit had been granted special powers to achieve his diabolical ends. Now is a time of watchfulness and prayer. The work here is scarcely to be mastered. But this is also a part of the trials of war, and we will strive to appease the justice of God by patient suffering."

9. Her innate generosity of heart was manifested by daily presents of delicacies, which she prepared for the suffering. At Christmas she arranged a festivity in all the military hospitals and in the Old Dominican building at Aix la Chapelle. With the aid of benevolent ladies, who cheerfully volunteered their services, she prepared a surprise for each inmate in the shape of some useful present. She also was mindful of the wives of a number of French officers, who had come to Aix la Chapelle, where the fortunes of war had brought their husbands captive. Some of them, desirous of assisting their sick countrymen, assembled in the mother-house three times a week to sew. To surprise these ladies and their children, she had a Christmas tree set up for them, a new spectacle to them, with a little gift for each one.

10. Assiduous in procuring bodily comforts for the poor soldier, as Mother Frances was, she showed still greater interest in their spiritual welfare. Among the sick and wounded Frenchmen there were many who, though Catholics, had neglected their religious duties and were ill instructed in their faith. She therefore had pamphlets printed, at her own expense, in German and in French, containing prayers and instructions, and distributed them freely amongst the soldiers. As a consequence, many were brought back to their duty. When the publisher, after printing many thousands, called her attention to the great costs already incurred, she told him to continue printing them; divine Providence would provide payment. This work of charity is said to have cost her over 3000 thalers.

11. The official statement furnished to the war department shows that 125 Sisters of this Congregation were employed in the service of the wounded during this war, from its beginning in 1870, until May, 1871, and that they ministered to over 3000 patients every day. Empress Augusta, under date of December 31st, 1871, addressed the following letter to Mother Frances, and with it, sent her the military decoration of the Iron Cross, in grateful recognition of the Sisters' services:

"Under God's gracious protection the war is victoriously ended, to the everlasting glory of the German nation; peace, on which I implore God's blessing, is restored. Sisters of your Order were conspicuous among those that assisted the warriors on the field of battle and on the couch of suffering,

ministering to and aiding, consoling and encouraging them in a spirit of charity truly Christian, and with a devotedness most self-sacrificing. The German people honor with a grateful heart a ministry so noble; and His Majesty, the emperor and king, joins in the recognition due to the devoted patriotism and zealous ministrations of the Sisters at the seat of war as well as at home. Deeds like theirs find their true reward in the consciousness of duty well performed, and before this divine approval fade all honors, externally bestowed on individual Sisters, whose ministrations were offered in the full knowledge of being considered those of the Congregation whose members they are in virtue of their holy vocation. For my part, there remains only a grateful appreciation, and this, Reverend Mother, I express to you and to your Congregation with all my heart. I charge you with the manifestation of this my gratitude to each and all of the Sisters.

"As a signal token commemorative of blessed ministrations in the country's service, I transmit to you, by order of His Majesty the emperor and king, the cross of Merit, with which His August Highness has honored German women and maidens distinguished for their deeds during the late war, and direct you to preserve it as a lasting memorial of ministrations during a period of renown, and of the gratitude which I, the German empire's empress and Prussia's queen, owe them, and which to express was a pleasure to me. AUGUSTA."

BERLIN, December 31st, 1871.

12. A letter written by Mother Frances, July 10th, 1871, to Count Egon von Hoensbroech, giving her views concerning the mention by name of Sisters that had been engaged in military hospitals, is very characteristic and abounds in exalted sentiments. It is as follows:

"Your favor of the 5th inst., containing blanks to be filled and returned to Prince Von Pless, general inspector of volunteer nursing, was duly received. Presuming that this demand of the names of the Sisters of the Congregation engaged during the war of 1870—1871 on German soil in ministering to the sick, is made for the purpose of placing them on record with those to be singled out for reward in recognition of their services for the country, I beg leave to state to you the reasons that impel me to decline such a personal reward or individual mention. According to my view of the matter this recognition would not be in conformity with the spirit of Catholic religious communities. Services rendered by religious to sick and wounded soldiers are, in my opinion, not the personal merit of individual Sisters, but rather that of the entire community to which they belong. Their ministrations in military hospitals, much as they may have been in accord with their own desire and the spirit in which they were educated, were nevertheless not the result of their own volition, but that of their Superiors' order and arrangement. Everything done by individual Sisters on the fields of battle and in military hospitals in pursuance of their vocation, would have been accomplished just as well by other members of the community, whom

the Superiors were obliged to keep at home for the service of the poor, sick, etc. in their own neighborhood. Just as those Sisters that were engaged during the war in volunteer nursing cheerfully fulfilled their duties to the full extent of their abilities, and, I may mention it without rashness, often even overtaxed their strength, thus also would all the members of the community have hastened to the seat of war and to the hospitals, to sacrifice themselves for their suffering brethren. Those German women and maidens, who generously devoted themselves to the service of the wounded without belonging to a religious community, selected the place for and the nature of their ministrations by their own free choice, and their achievements redound to their own personal, individual merit, for which they deserve acknowledgment. But not a single member of a religious community was engaged anywhere by self-appointment, and independently of her Superiors. As twig and branch, separated from the parent stem, are dead, thus blossom and fruit are the ornament and glory, not of the twig and branch, but of the parent stem. Such is the life of a community — such were the ministrations of the Sisters during the war: whatever they accomplished singly or in groups, was the effect of their life-giving connection with their community, whose agents they had been deemed worthy to be. Services rendered by individual Sisters do not constitute a personal merit; but that of their community. If they deserve recognition, it belongs not to individuals, but to the community as such.

"These, honored sir, are the principles which impel me to decline the acceptance of any mark of distinction whatsoever that may be intended for the members of our community lately engaged on German soil in volunteer nursing. You will perceive that they are founded in the spirit of Catholic religious life. Please, therefore, to communicate them, if necessary, to Prince Von Pless, and accept the assurance of my sincerest respect and regard.

Your humble servant

SR. FRANCES SCHERVIER,
Superioress of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis."

13. In July, 1871, St. Mary's Hospital in Duesseldorf, which had been used as a temporary soldiers' infirmary, was finished and opened as a Catholic hospital. An epidemic of smallpox had necessitated the opening of an infirmary for those suffering from this malady in the garden of the Max Joseph Hospital; but its proximity to the other patients was regarded as a danger, and the latter were transferred to St. Mary's Hospital. After the smallpox infirmary was discontinued, the pauper commission ordered the poor and aged to the Max Joseph Institute, and placed it in charge of the Sisters.

14. About the same time, the Rev. Dr. Schmitz, curate in Duesseldorf, had succeeded in establishing a servants' home. It was called St. Ann's Institute, and placed under the management of the Sisters.—The Congregation now had three important establishments in Duesseldorf. On the 26th of December, 1873, it also took charge of a servants' home already

established in Aix la Chapelle. One in Cologne they had undertaken to direct as early as 1866.

By taking charge of and directing such asylums for female servants who came from the country districts into the turmoil of great cities, or who were left for a time without employment, the Sisters relieved one of the principal wants of our time, and remedied one of the most pressing needs of our large cities. The moral corruption attendant on the absence of religion in so many families, often causes inexperienced and careless girls to fall into snares, and it is very difficult for them to avoid the danger of moral and physical wreck, if there is no asylum in which they may take refuge to find counsel and protection. There is no denial of the fact, that in great cities many girls stray from the path of virtue only because they have no temporary shelter while out of employment. In the servants' homes they are received at a nominal compensation, and find kind mothers in the charitable Sisters.

15. We have yet to mention that the charity of Mother Frances came to the relief of two sorely tried villages, where her daughters showed a truly heroic courage amid general affliction. Hellenthal, in the district of Schleiden, was stricken, in 1871, with smallpox of a most virulent type. Immediately Sister Agnes, a member of the Congregation since many years, and just returned from the smallpox hospital in Duesseldorf, and a younger Sister, were sent there. They were domiciled in a house whose tenants had lately died of the disease. The villagers were so afraid of infection, that the Sisters had to beg their food from door to door, receiving it

outside, for they were not permitted to enter a house. Nor would anybody remove the corpses of the dead, so that in one instance they themselves had to close the coffin and place it in the street. After a month of unutterable hardships for the Sisters, the epidemic ceased. When the Sisters were about to leave, the magistrate and people of the village urgently implored them to remain a few days longer, "as a protection against the disease," they said. And remain they did: a proof that sometimes the so-called weaker sex surpasses in courage the sterner.

16. Shortly afterwards, they received a call to another village in the same district. Typhoid fever raged violently in Wallenberg. In one house seven members of a family died. The number of the sick was so great, that during the first two weeks Sister Agnes was almost continually occupied with them day and night. In some houses, misery was at its height, the neighbors fearing to enter; the Sisters had therefore even to attend to the cattle. Once, Sister Agnes could not assist at Mass even on the feast of St. Francis, because the church was far off, and she could not leave her patients. Under such conditions, the ministrations to the sick are the best service of God. After several weeks' duration, the epidemic had run its course.—We add, that the sisters ministered to 333 patients in the smallpox hospital at Aix la Chapelle, from the 1st of January, 1872, to the 31st of December, 1873.

17. In 1871, Mother Frances had the great consolation of participating in the celebration of the Papal Jubilee of Pius IX., the twenty-fifth

anniversary of his elevation to the Pontifical throne. As an expression of her devotion and veneration for the Supreme Pontiff, she had the invalid Sisters make a rug composed of small pieces of variously colored silk, and white a silken *zucchetta*, or skull-cap, as the Pope is accustomed to wear. She commissioned one of her friends, a priest of Aix la Chapelle, who was on the point of starting for Rome, to present her little gifts to the Holy Father, together with the following address, written by her in French:

"Most Holy Father!

On the occasion of Thy sovereign jubilee, when all Christendom lies prostrate before Thy exalted throne to do homage to Thy Holiness, permit, most Holy Father, the poor daughters of St. Francis to raise their voices in trembling veneration to express their most humble homage and perfect submission. They beg leave to spread at Thy feet a plain rug composed of small pieces stitched together to make an entirety: a symbol of the mutual charity in which they desire to grow and persevere as true children of the One, Holy, Catholic Church, and as loyal, humble subjects of our glorious Supreme Pastor. May our good resolutions, by the operation of divine grace, be a refreshing fragrancy to the priestly heart of Thy Holiness."

The Holy Father accepted the little gift with his usual affability. And what Mother Frances had not dared to hope, but had probably insinuated to her messenger, he exchanged the *zucchetta* he wore for the one she had sent. Thus she had the consolation of leaving it to the Congregation as a precious remembrance of this solemn occasion.

18. The storm against the Church, and especially against religious Orders, which culminated in the May Laws of 1872, now prevented the establishment of new branch houses in Germany. During the last three years of her life, Mother Frances was occupied in preserving, amid great difficulties, what she had hitherto achieved; and she had to sacrifice, or rather abandon to the will of God, not a little of that. During her long term of office, she had, herself, admitted 815 Sisters into the Congregation in Germany; and during her life-time 272 received the habit in America. Of these 202, in both Provinces, had died. — As is well known, the mortality among young Sisters engaged in the service of the sick, is very great; and in her Congregation it was increased, partly by the poor and austere mode of life which the Sisters had to lead during the first years, partly in consequence of the severe labors which so many Sisters underwent without due regard to their health. The latter was especially the case during the three wars, and the epidemics mentioned above.

The life of Mother Frances now more and more assumed the character of an immediate preparation for death. However, before turning our attention to the last three years of her life, we shall glance, in the Third Book, at the interior workings of grace in this servant of God — at her virtues, and the principles by which she was guided in the government of her Congregation.

BOOK III.

CHARACTER AND VIRTUES OF MOTHER FRANCES.

HER LIFE AS A RELIGIOUS, AND AS A SUPERIORESS.

DIFFICULTIES OCCASIONED BY THE MAY LAWS.

HER HAPPY DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

Testimony of Witnesses.

1. The youth of Mother Frances, the development of her interior life, and her works of charity, related in the First and Second Book, will enable the reader to form for himself a correct picture of this extraordinary woman. Nevertheless, many facts were passed over, without which this picture would be wanting in numerous beautiful traits, and without which a true estimate of her character could not be made. There is no doubt that her external work is a grand one, but we deem ourselves justified in saying that her interior life, her familiar intercourse with God, is more grand and marvellous. This our view would undoubtedly receive further confirmation, had she continued the record of her interior struggles, sufferings and victories beyond the beginning of the fifties. But to our regret this was not done. On principle, she concealed as much as possible her good works, and especially her inner life. Concerning the latter, some light is gained from a few letters to one of her spiritual directors, and from casual remarks contained in others. However, when great souls walk before God in truth and simplicity, their interior virtue is easily discernible in the mirror of their external life; therefore her heroic works and sacrifices give ample testimony of the exalted spirit from which they sprung. Moreover, as she lived in a large community, and occupied, as Superioress, a conspicuous place, being the light to which many eyes continually turned, witnesses are not few of the numerous traits

of heroic virtue in which Mother Frances excelled.

The following representation of her interior and exterior life was compiled from the notices, written and oral, of many of her daughters, and from the author's personal observation. First, we give authentic testimony concerning her personal habits and work; then we shall consider her as a religious and foundress of a religious congregation, and we shall see, in what spirit she guided and instructed her daughters. For obvious reasons, we deem it proper to give, first, the views of prominent men acquainted with Mother Frances, who are far above any suspicion of party interest, enthusiasm or misinformation.

2. In the ranks of the clergy we mention first the two archbishops, Cardinals Von Geissel and Melchers. Both expressed themselves before many witnesses in terms of greatest respect for her personally, and for her merits, Archbishop Melchers adding that her most conspicuous trait was profound humility. We have already noticed the high esteem Bishop Laurent had for her after an acquaintance of nearly twenty-five years. He had closely observed her, and in her necrology, gave ample testimony of his great esteem for her. We might also cite, for the same purpose, the entire clergy and a great number of prominent men of Aix la Chapelle, aye, all its inhabitants. Her name was known there as was no other one, and was mentioned in veneration. The phrase, "There is but one Mother Frances," was, so to say, a by-word in the city. Outside of Aix la Chapelle the same was true, and we subjoin some of the written testimonials sent us by priests, secular and regular.

3. Rev. William Müngersdorf, for a long time Provincial of the Lazarists and mentioned in Book II., ch. 2, no. 10., was intimately acquainted with Mother Frances since 1845, and had repeatedly conducted retreats in the mother-house. He writes from Vienna, under date of February 13th, 1887, that her whole life was rich in virtue and good works. He enumerates many of her virtues, and dwells especially on "her humility and self-abandonment, by which she was so penetrated, that it seemed inseparable from her words and actions, and gave her the strength to bear with calm equanimity the many humiliations with which her life was fraught." He further mentions her simplicity, "which directed her will and heart to God alone, and enabled her to converse with high and low without fear, as God inspired her;" her firmness, "by which, once assured of the will of God, she persistently fulfilled it without regard to human opinion;" her zeal for the glory of God, for which she found no sacrifice too great, no difficulty too troublesome, "so that it seemed Jesus and souls were the only interests which claimed her attention;" also, her boundless charity for the poor, which proved that every destitute and suffering person represented to her Our Divine Saviour. "These are some of the virtues that render the venerable Mother Frances memorable and her remembrance dear to me. The history of her life will be a portrayal of the most exalted virtues for the glory of God, and for our edification and imitation."

4. Rev. Father Lessmann, S. J., who, besides being Provincial, filled other important offices in

the Society of Jesus, and is universally esteemed, wrote from Buffalo, N. Y., U. S. immediately on receiving the death notice of Mother Frances. The letter is addressed to Sr. Vincentia, and is dated December 15th, 1876: "The notice of the death of the late Mother Frances so affected me, that I feel as if I could not realize its import. I mourn with you, and if I say this in all simplicity, I believe there is hardly another person that will understand me as well as you, because you in a measure knew my relations to the venerable Mother. I say, 'in a measure,' for in full God alone knows them. Last evening I recommended the remembrance of her soul to the holy Masses and prayers of our whole community, and have just celebrated Mass for her... At the same time, I am convinced that she does not need our prayers, or will need them only for a short time, and will instead pray for us before the throne of God. May she very soon give an indication to her children that they have in her a patroness in heaven. . . . Such an extraordinarily numerous family, in which each of the children entertained so trusting a confidence and love for their Mother, will not easily be found again in any other religious community." In another letter, of March 1st, 1887, Father Lessmann says: "I saw her perform really heroic acts of virtue." In a conference given by this same Rev. Father to the Sisters, and of which they took notes, he said: "Mother Frances was childlike to a great degree. She was simple-hearted and united with God. She never sought herself; it seemed impossible to her. She joined to her great virtues a manly courage; she feared no

difficulty; always ready for sacrifices, she recoiled at nothing when the glory of God was at stake. What charity, what charity! Day and night she thought of you, was concerned for you with a mother's love. And withal she was profoundly humble. In her responsible position, which she would have gladly exchanged for the humblest one, she was so plain and lowly, as if she were quite incompetent to govern the Congregation." A trustworthy Sister says in one of her letters, that Father Lessmann declared before a number of Sisters of a different community, that "he never became acquainted with another soul so imbued with a lively faith as she; that he regarded her as the greatest woman of her time."

5. Several priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, notably Fathers Fey and Heilig, entertained a high regard for Mother Frances. Father Heilig, a venerable old man, shortly before his death, in a conversation with the author, mentioned the virtues of this rare woman, emphasizing her boundless charity, her devotedness to every good cause, and her unexampled generosity, which he himself had experienced.

It is superfluous to mention that she was also greatly revered by not a few Franciscan Fathers who became acquainted with her in their capacity as confessors or directors of retreats. Father Bonaventure Wessendorf, deceased in 1890, was her confessor for several years. In speaking and writing of her, he often expressed his admiration for her sincere virtue. In a conference, he addressed the Sisters as follows on the virtues of their vener-

able Foundress: "She guarded her conscience with the greatest care in order to avoid everything that might in the least offend God. As soon as she believed herself guilty of the least transgression, she hastened, if possible, to the sacrament of penance; and with what faith and contrition she would make her confession! It seemed as if she *felt* the most sacred Blood of Our Saviour penetrating her soul and cleansening it from all impurities. She preferred short confessions, being too much occupied with the grace received to give attention to long exhortations. . . . She scarcely knew any other fear but that of sin. Once, when I was obliged to inform her of something very annoying, but was enabled to add that there was nothing sinful in it, she replied: 'I am resigned, because there is no offense of God connected with it.' In penance and mortification, work and toil, she would have gone far beyond the permissible if she had done more than she did. In these also she persevered until death."

6. Two other written testimonials of her confessors are preserved. The Rev. Director Fey, known and well beloved by all in Aix la Chapelle, since 1845 in close relations with Mother Frances and for many years her confessor, writes in a letter to the General Superioress of the Congregation: "Of the disinterestedness and heroic charity of the late Mother I need not say a word. In this respect she was incomparable in things great and small. One could not visit her without having to accept something. How often she compelled me to accept large sums for the relief of poor families even at

times when she was oppressed by debt. One had to be very careful not to mention the wants of others in conversation with her. It once happened that mention was made to her of a poor, virtuous girl who desired to enter a contemplative Order, but had not the necessary dowry. That very same day she sent her three thousand thalers! . . . But you were yourselves continually witnesses of her generosity, which with her had become a holy passion. Moreover, nothing could deter her in this respect. Often, when most villainously deceived, she had but a smile. — I must desist mentioning little things so well known to all. The great things that I could mention I must keep locked up in my heart; my relations to Mother Frances as confessor during many years seal up my lips. Could I but speak, I should relate astonishing things, examples of an intrepidity so sublime, as, in truth, I never found recorded of a saint. This may sound exaggerated, yet it is literally true. St. Catharine of Siena held a criminal's head in her lap at his execution; Mother Frances did bolder things, which the angels will relate to you on the great day of retribution."

At such declarations of her confessor, doubts might arise in the minds of those not acquainted with Mother Frances, but not with those that knew her, because their credibility is enhanced by other facts that became known.

7. Let us also hear Father Lambert Bethmann, often mentioned in the course of this narrative as a particular friend and confidant of Mother Frances. Under date of February 15th, 1887, he wrote from Havre: "I have so great an esteem and veneration for venerable Mother Frances, that I pray three

times a day for the intention of her canonization, invoke her in my difficulties, and rank her amongst my patrons. She founded the Congregation through obedience, because she had been commanded by God. Keen and penetrating as her intellect was, she nevertheless excelled in humility, self-denial and blind obedience to her confessor. She was so humble, that she willingly suffered the most grievous affront. Much that I could relate of her must remain untold because it came to my knowledge in my capacity as spiritual director and confessor."

We omit the opinions of many others who, immediately after the venerable Mother's death, praised her exalted virtues. Four or five religious of other Orders, who were greatly indebted to her, gave pathetic expression to their immense grief at the bitter loss they sustained in the death of this "angel of counsel, consolation and help," and unanimously declared their conviction that she is now their advocate in heaven.

8. Testimony of such significance by persons not connected with the Congregation, suffices to demonstrate that Mother Frances had by far exceeded the measure of grace and virtue usually accorded to Christians. It also serves to impress us with the truth of what we derive from other sources, and now proceed to relate. For all, let glory be given to "the Father of lights, with Whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration," Who operates in and co-operates with all holy souls, so that they unanimously confess with St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace in me hath not been void." (I Cor. XV. 10.)

CHAPTER II.

General Outlines of the Character of Mother Frances.

1. The outward appearance of Mother Frances had nothing remarkable to the superficial observer except a pair of eyes in the pallid face revealing that in her small, delicate body dwelt a soul full of spirit, power and love. Observing her busily engaged during the day, one might have been led to think that her great, motherly heart was quite spent in external ministrations for the welfare of others, so precisely, quickly and briskly did she despatch one affair after the other. It seemed that she thought of nothing else but to be engaged with Martha in the service of others. But to the observant eye it was soon discernible that a higher life and an internal energy animated and ennobled all her external occupations. According to the testimony of others, also of persons not religious, and having no relations with her, her whole being, especially her eye, had an air of spirituality and brightness that inspired them with awe and involuntary veneration. Even uncultured minds did not easily resist the sense of purity, truth and charity which her presence diffused, and by which she drew noble souls, as by a secret charm, to venerate and love her.

Concerning this a Sister writes: "When, in October, 1866, I saw Mother Frances for the first time, one glance at her deeply impressed me. I thought to myself, here now I find in reality that expression of sanctity, which I so often admired in the old Italian paintings of saints." As a lady

expresses it: "She had about her a remarkable heavenly air, that captivated the soul, and drew it to the love of God. To see her, was to experience a sensation of delight." Common poor people often expressed their impression of her in the words: "Mother Frances is not human, she is an angel."

2. In conversation, she was plain and simple; there was nothing ceremonious or stiff, no empty formality in her demeanor; everything about her was genuine and truthful. At the same time she was most obliging, sympathetic and affectionate. After a short interview with her one could not but trust her implicitly and admire the candor of her soul. Though nothing was farther from her great modesty than the exhibition of her gifts and talents, or the obtrusion of self, yet every observer was soon made aware that she possessed a firmness, brightness and precision rarely found in woman. Together with childlike simplicity, purity and discipline, she manifested, as a predominant trait of character, a heart overflowing with maternal charity, joined with masculine power, clearness and determination.

3. Her attainments at school could scarcely have surpassed the limits of an elementary education, as she was obliged to leave school at the early age of fourteen to take charge of a large household. She was then more proficient in French than in German, as is demonstrated by her letters of that period. Later she spoke German fluently and wrote it correctly. Though she limited her later reading to religious and ascetical works, she greatly enlarged

her sphere of knowledge in the school of experience. She mastered the intricacies of the spiritual life and became well versed in the duties of a religious. She discerned with ease the interior condition of her daughters, who felt a great relief in knowing that they were understood immediately when they had recourse to their Mother in trials; moreover, they were often reminded by her of secrets of their soul. Her instructions and addresses to the Sisters, and her circular letters, made a great impression because of their clearness and unction. Many of the former were transcribed from memory, very likely in an incomplete manner; yet these transcriptions demonstrate that she knew how to inculcate the general truths in a manner at once effective and interesting.

She had a natural fondness for poetry, and was not without poetic talent. In certain frames of mind she would express her sentiments in spontaneous verses. During the first years of her religious life she wrote some of these effusions, but when her confessor dissuaded her from further attempts at versification, she discarded the practice for ever.

Music also, especially in the form of spiritual canticles, had great charms for her. She inclined not to intricate artistic productions, but to plain melodies; but these mightily aroused her soul. She practised, and had the Sisters practise, some of them with Sister Ignatia, a good musician, who for years led the choir in the mother-house. Even herein she evinced her love for the poor. "The poor," she would say, "can not frequent concerts

and delight in music, which also is a gift of God. But, nevertheless, they should have an opportunity of hearing it: let us therefore give them good music in church."

4. It scarcely needs mention that her impressible soul was greatly affected by the beauties of nature, and that her living faith caused her to make use of created things as a ladder, on which to ascend with her heart to God. She delighted in flowers, and in the starry firmament. She found a child's pleasure in a turtle dove which the Sisters had tamed. She felt a peculiar interest for sparrows, and often would feed them, though she would not allow pet birds or flowers for recreation. In the sparrows that continually visit the houses, flying about in their brown garb and collecting the remnants everywhere, she saw the image of her daughters who in their habit visit the dwellings and huts of the poor, seeking divine recompense by deeds of charity. Like her holy Father, St. Francis, she had a great affection and compassion for animals. If she found a worm on her path, she removed it so that it might not be crushed; she would then remember with great emotion Our Saviour, Who compared Himself in His passion to a worm.

5. Despite her great gifts of mind, and the austerities of her vocation, she preserved to the end, like so many other great and noble characters, a childlike disposition of soul. She would enjoy trifles that expressed a spiritual significance, for instance, small pictures of saints, or flowers. She was always cheerful and affable, though continually oppressed by sufferings and difficulties. The

interior peace of God, by which she was replenished, would sometimes, when she was with the Sisters, suffuse her face with pleasure and impel her joyfully to clap her hands. Like St. Francis, she was pleased to see her daughters cheerful, and liked them to enjoy, during recreation, little pleasantries, and rhymes of their own invention. She followed the injunction of the Apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." (Philip. IV. 4.)

6. Gratitude, especially towards God, was also one of her notable virtues. On nearly all occasions one could hear the following or similar expressions: "For this we must be very thankful to God." Towards men she evinced the same gratitude, never forgetting the least act of kindness. The smallest service done to her or to her Congregation would oblige her, and she would not be content to express her acknowledgment, but was not at rest until she had in some way shown her appreciation.

7. A personality thus charming and energetic exerted, by its own force, an influence which those who came in contact with her, and especially women, could scarcely resist. But the secret of her influence had a still higher source—her interior union with God, to Whom she had devoted herself from her earliest years as a willing instrument in life and death. She lived in and by God. Great as her exterior activity appeared, it was entirely controlled by her interior recollection, by which she directed her spirit to God, and was intent on obeying the inspirations of the Holy Ghost with childlike trust. Christ was the sun of her life, illuminating her spirit with a higher light than

human prudence could give, inflaming her heart with a love for which no sacrifice was too great, clothing her soul with virtues, and making her external life fruitful of innumerable good works done for and in God. On her part, she did everything to arrive at that high standard of interior life which is briefly and truly described in the following words of the "Imitation of Christ": "To walk with God within, and not to be held by any affection without, is the state of an internal man." (Book II. 6, 4.) In a word, she had been created anew in Christ, and therefore her works were blessed by the Almighty. Blessed by God, she brought this blessing also to others; and interiorly guided by God and following a higher light, she was enabled sometimes to achieve deeds of such difficulty and boldness, that, in general, human prudence could not but have dissuaded her from them.

8. She never began the least work without first elevating her soul to God; and if the matter was of any importance, she would kneel and say a short prayer, alone or with the Sisters present, to obtain the grace of performing the work well and with a pure intention, or to choose the right in cases of doubt. It can be truly said of her, that she decided nothing without first consulting the will of God. Then she generally had an inner consciousness that would give her, at the moment of action, a certain sense of security as to what the divine will desired of her. This was the case especially in difficult questions which had to be decided in haste, so that she could not consult her spiritual directors. Without weighing the reasons, she would feel an

impulse so strong, and a conviction of the divine will so certain, that she resolved upon great sacrifices and riskful charities without further deliberation; and her success would prove that she was not a victim of delusion.

Once, she informed the author, for certain reasons, of what she had done to preserve the good repute of a family. He was astonished at such a heroic charity, but observed that she had endangered her own reputation. "All I know," she replied, "is, that at the moment, I was quite certain of the will of God in the matter."

Such a proceeding is not to be recommended to everyone as a fixed rule of action; for, as St. Philip Neri says, wise resolutions demand time, reflection and prayer. She herself often received light only after continued prayer. She would repeatedly order the making of novenas in her convents; she consulted wise men, and would not act before she was sure to have discerned the will of God. Often it also happened that her first, so to say instinctive perceptions proved right, but she would change her mind by reason of further reflection, or influenced by the opposition of others. For when there was not question of certain principles and duties, concerning which she was unalterably firm, she was very yielding. She also willingly accepted the counsel of others and acted accordingly, even against her own convictions. She unreservedly submitted to the decisions of her confessors. But when she was certain of the will of God she was inflexible, knew no human respect, and was afraid of no sacrifice, leaving the result trustfully to Providence.

Of God alone she expected success; always ready to sacrifice her own will, she loved and sought the fulfilment of the divine will alone. This trust and confidence in God is common to all saints; it is the source of their strength, and at the same time the cause of their continual growth in holiness. Only by it can we understand how Mother Frances could achieve things so grand, destitute as she was of all human aid at the beginning.

9. The assertion of those that said they beheld in her something supernatural and heavenly did not spring from a delusion. She was truly possessed of a spirit higher than human nature can infuse, and this spirit clarified and refined her noble gifts of nature. It is the last end of all men to attain a life that is unutterably above all powers, desires and sentiments of nature. God Himself, the Tri-Une, shall be their "reward exceedingly great" (Gen. XV. I.) in serene contemplation, in loving enjoyment, in life everlasting.

To this exalted life of eternal glory corresponds an interior life here below that is not of the flesh, but "born of God" (John I. 13.) and infused by the Holy Ghost, which, though having its source in time, shall not subside with it, but have its issue in eternity. This exalted life of grace has its origin not in the inclinations and powers of nature, but in Christ, the Head of the children of God. Therefore, by an interior mission of the Holy Ghost, He pours His life and love into the hearts of men. Contemplating this exalted destiny, Holy Church, in every Mass, exclaims "*Sursum corda*," to remind mortals every day, that they are called to the attainment of

the highest goal there is and can be, the possession of God, by hope, love and labor in Christ.

10. But in order to arrive at such a height, to become, as it were "one spirit" (I. Cor. VI. 17.) with God, the heart of man must cease to devôte itself in false affection to self and to creatures; it must rise above self. The mystic divine, Denis the Areopagite, says: "Love of God operates transcendence of self: ecstacy; it tolerates not that the lover belongs to himself, but insists on his belonging to the object of his love." St. Paul expresses the same sentiment saying: "You are dead, and your life is hid with God in Christ." (Col. III. 3.) He intends to convey the meaning: As Christians you are dead, according to the heart and affection, to the blind inclinations of nature, which is prone to things transcient; you have attained instead a life more exalted, for you are to live "alive unto God in Christ Jesus, Our Lord." (Rom. VI. 11.)

St. Francis of Sales, in his excellent book *Theotimus*, teaches on this subject that the soul, in order to attain to the height of divine love, must be despoiled of all earthly inclinations, and of all self-esteem, in the same manner as Christ was despoiled of His garments and condemned to the death of the cross. It must die in spiritual spoliation with Christ on the cross, in order to rise with Him to a new life in God. This is wrought by the Spirit of God through love. "For," he concludes, "love is strong as death, it makes us leave all things. At the same time it is glorious as the resurrection, for it reclothes us with honor and glory."

How well Mother Frances comprehended this sublime doctrine is shown by the following aspiration, written by her as early as 1859: "O Heart of Jesus, dying for love of me: grant that I may die for love of Thee; also, that I may die to self for love of Thee!"

11. We deemed it necessary to premise these remarks on supernatural life and mystic death, because without the knowledge of this Catholic doctrine the life of the saints is unintelligible, and the works and principles of Mother Frances could not be judged rightly. Asceticism, especially in its higher, mystic forms, is a closed book — not only to unbelievers, but, alas! also to many Christians. As a consequence, the word of the cross and of spiritual death is to them "foolishness" (I. Cor. I. 18.), and the higher wisdom of the saints is to the wise of this world a deplorable error.

To Mother Frances are also applicable the words of the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. II. 20.) — "Not I:" she was dead to the world and to self, so that it was said of her: "Mother Frances never thinks of herself." The following chapters will show that this "death of the heart," this renunciation of all that is not God and leads not to Him, continued to increase during her life. To such a death there could not be wanting the reflex of a heavenly life.

O glorious life and love! O happy death and renunciation! To die to things temporal, and to rise to God in love is the way to happiness and to life everlasting.

CHAPTER III.

Her Life in and by Faith.

1. For a better comprehension of the inner life of Mother Frances, we must first of all become acquainted with the rare firmness, broadness and vitality of her faith. Belief in Catholic truth had taken entire possession of and enlightened her spirit; it dominated her thoughts and sentiments, her aims and actions so completely, and by so peaceful and sweet a certitude, that the truths of faith were, to her, not only beyond all doubt, but they illumined, like a sun, her whole life. The gift of God, which St. Paul wished to the Romans, "that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. XV. 13.), had been accorded to her in full measure.

2. True faith alone, communicated to the spirit externally by instruction, and interiorly by illumination, frees the human mind darkened by sin, from the slavery of countless errors and the Babylonian confusion of thought and speech, that notably has always dominated the realm of mere natural knowledge, and continues to dominate it to a monstrous degree in our day as soon as thought is directed beyond the perceptible to things higher. At the same time it elevates the spirit to a realm of a more exalted order, to the realm of divine truth. For true faith is a participation in the infallible, eternal, divine Truth; by it the soul, soaring aloft, enters the luminous realm of divine Truth. Faith is the aurora which prepares, announces and introduces the rising of the sun of the eternal day, which

brings to a sudden close all delusions of mortal life, and all phantasies of the inflated wisdom of the human mind. On the contrary, the glory of God is reflected much more perfectly in every human soul by faith than in the great visible world, though our dim eyes are unable to perceive it.

3. Faith discovers to us not only great mysteries of the Godhead and of life eternal, but it also teaches us to recognize our life's task and its duties, and to discover the true value of things transitory, and of human endeavors. Now there are a great many Christians that faithfully receive the mysteries of religion, but conceal the light of the faith "under the bushel" of worldly-mindedness, as often as its practice comes in question in daily life and in its bearing on worldly goods, evils and occurrences. They "hold captive," as the Apostle says, "truth in injustice," and scarcely differing from unbelievers in their judgment of the conditions of mortal life, "walk in darkness and know not whither they go." (John XII. 35.)

It was quite different with Mother Frances. Her mind so dwelt in the light of faith, that she judged all matters pertaining to temporal life from motives inspired by it. Every protracted conversation with her convinced the observer forthwith that she dwelt in a higher light and considered all occurrences in human life in their relation to God and eternity. The possessions, enjoyments and honors of this life had value for her only in so far as they could serve the love of God as means for the performance of good works, and as steps to ascend to God. She regarded everything good as a

gift of God (James I. 17), for which thanks must be given; adversities she considered as opportunities of penance and of becoming like unto Christ.

4. Faith is not only a light that illumines the mind, but it is also a power of God elevating and transfiguring the entire life, a divine seed which is to bring forth fruit. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebr. XI. 6.) For, as Pope St. Leo the Great teaches, "whatsoever does not spring from the source of faith, does not attain to the everlasting rewards. Works adapted for heaven are constituted differently from those merely temporal."

The portrait of Mother Frances would be incomplete, did we not mention some of the fruits of this faith. First of all, we shall call attention, in this chapter, to her zeal and devotion to everything that related to divine service and to participation in ecclesiastical life.

5. The sublime mysteries of faith, especially those of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and Passion of the Son of God, were to her not mere ideas, but spirit and life, light and warmth. On Christmas, when she was wont to read the beginning of the Gospel of St. John to the community, she would weep at the words: "And the Word was made flesh." In a letter, written 1851, to Sister Bonaventure in Bonn, she gives expression to her devout sentiments in the following charming words: "Together with the dear, sweet Infant, Whom Heaven has presented to us, a superabundance of peace and bliss descends into our hearts, so that I need not wish other blessings to you. Let

us rejoice in the incomprehensible mercies of God! He, Who in His inconceivable immensity and majesty is unapproachable, gives Himself to us an Infant and permits us to embrace Him! Often remember also our holy Father, St. Francis, who so dearly loved the Christ-Child, and above all thank the Mother of God of whom He was born for us. Rejoice with us in the Lord during these happy, holy days!"

During Holy Week she participated so fervently in the Passion of Our Lord, that her whole demeanor expressed sorrow. When the bells sounded again on Holy Saturday, she would become resplendent with a heavenly joy. Sometimes she would intone suddenly, in the midst of her work, the *Regina coeli laetare.* — Altogether, her life was so deeply rooted in the Catholic Church, that she not only celebrated the feasts of the ecclesiastical year, but, as it were, lived them over. On all the principal feasts, especially those already mentioned, on Pentecost, Corpus Christi, the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception and the Annunciation of Mary, also on the feasts of her principal patrons, St. Francis and St. Clare, and on the feast of All Saints, her soul was quite enraptured. On All Souls' day she would kneel in prayer almost all day, and once said to one of the Sisters about her: "To-day I cannot work, I can only pray."

6. From the beginning of her religious life she received holy Communion every day with so great devotion, that she often appeared transfigured. Even on long journeys she never missed Communion if she could possibly receive it, and despite the

greatest fatigue she would remain fasting till towards noon to assist at a late Mass and receive the Blessed Eucharist. Her devout sentiments towards this august Sacrament may be judged from the following lines, which she wrote to a convert preparing for her first Communion, in 1855: "When you receive these lines, you are nearing the happy moment in which your God and Lord shall deign to unite Himself to you. Oh wonderful humility of the transcendent love of Our Divine Redeemer, to give Himself entirely to us poor mortals! He is the affectionate physician of our soul, and at the same time the remedy healing its wounds. He Who brought us forth on the cross amid the greatest suffering, also nourishes us like a most loving mother on the milk of His most sacred flesh and blood. He, our most loving and holy God, and our all, desires to replenish you; therefore open to Him your heart, that He may fill it with His gifts and holy blessings. In that blissful moment do not forget the many who are devoted to you from the love of Jesus. On that sacred day we shall all receive that holy food, the flesh and blood of our God. Oh, let us become His good children, His faithful lambs! Holy, Immaculate Virgin, from whom the Holy Ghost formed the body of Our Redeemer, pray for us!"

She deemed Spiritual Communion of great importance, and often exhorted the Sisters to its practice. It was one of her greatest consolations to unite herself with her daughters spiritually with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. On returning from a journey or errand, she would kneel before the door of the

oratory, briefly to adore and salute the Blessed Sacrament.

7. She insisted, as a matter of course, that everything concerning the holy sacraments and divine service should be attended to with the greatest order, cleanliness and decorum. She had often observed, that when the Blessed Sacrament was brought to the sick poor, order and cleanliness, and the external preparations for the reception of the Divine Guest were wanting; therefore, when she was informed that the Blessed Sacrament was about to be brought to poor patients, she sent Sisters, or went herself, to make the necessary preparations. During the first years of her religious life the following incident occurred:

Once, being informed that the Blessed Sacrament was about to be brought to a very poor sick man, she went to prepare everything, but found such great destitution, that the man had not even a coverlet. Time would not allow her to return to the convent to get one, and she therefore asked a woman living in the same house to lend her something wherewith to cover the patient. The woman, herself poor, gave Mother Frances an apron. During the admistration of the Blessed Sacrament, the priest accidentally dropped the sacred host, and it fell on the apron. She took the latter home, had it washed, and sent it back to the owner with the words, that it had become of great value by that contact; God had thereby seemingly intended to reward her charity. The woman, who had hitherto led a rather irregular life, was so awed by these words and by the whole deportment of Mother

Frances, that she and several other persons reformed. She also returned the apron to the mother-house, where, our informant says, it is preserved even now.

8. Mother Frances observed the anniversary of her baptism with special devotion. On the 3d of January, 1852, she writes: "This afternoon it is thirty-two years since I received, in holy baptism, the grace of becoming a child of God and an heir of heaven." To a convert from Judaism she writes: "The curse is now taken from you. You have entered the sanctuary of the Church. You now belong to the one flock of Christ, and are a member of that sacred body of which Christ is the Head. Now I can greet you as a sister, as a dear sister in the Lord. Mary, the Holy, the Immaculate is our Mother. The Lord will open the eyes of your spirit more and more, and will move your heart, so that you shall know Him in His perfections, and shall learn to love Him above all things. But to attain this, we must walk in purity of heart, and seek to avoid every sin, even the least. Sin is an abomination before God, Who is purity and holiness itself. Who can comprehend the graces, the bliss you, the highly favored, have received? I can give thanks only in mute admiration. To-day I can not speak to you of anything else; the day, the time is too sacred."

We have already mentioned her mode of confession and her great recollection during it, and proceed to give some instances of her devotion at prayer.

9. The Sisters of her Congregation recite, in choir, the latin Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

With St. Benedict, she esteemed this public praise of God above all other obligations, regarding it as a sacred religious duty and a very important service of God. She never omitted to be present at it unless prevented by inevitable obstacles. Even when she arrived, quite fatigued by the journey, at a branch house during the time of choir, she would immediately join in it. The interior motives and sentiments that animated her may be gathered from her answer to a Sister who complained that she could not join, on account of hoarseness, in the loud recitation of the psalms: "I pity you very much," she said, "because you cannot recite the psalms aloud. What a sacrifice! If you bear it patiently, God will reward you well in heaven. I often feel so intensely for you, that I lower my voice, so that you bear it more easily. Indeed, I must always moderate my voice in order not to become too loud, when I reflect that I assist the angels by joining in their office of praising God on earth. I should like to call out in a loud voice again and again, so that all men might hear me, the invitation to praise and bless God." She strictly insisted on equal, distinct, dignified recitation of the office, and on the utmost external reverence and devotion during it. Whenever a mistake or interruption occurred, for instance, if someone made an unnecessary noise, she would deeply feel it, and would immediately kiss the floor herself, and later impose a penance on the careless Sister. If anything laughable occurred, as sometimes happened during the first years of the community on account of the want of room, she would immediately intone the psalm

Miserere, or if she herself felt her innate risibility provoked, she would hasten away. So great was her reverence for the holiness of the place, that she would receive no message in the oratory; if the door-keeper, on rare occasions, thought it necessary to make a communication to her there, she would place her finger on her lips, and go to some room near by, there to give the necessary orders. All the Sisters admired the fervency and zeal that she exhibited in everything relating to the service of God. At the close of the evening exercises, when she sprinkled the Sisters with holy water, as also when she led in prayer, it was done with such dignity and impressiveness, that her actions and words revealed unmistakably a soul penetrated with the most lively faith.

10. In a word, she held the ceremonies of the Church and blessed objects sacred, and regarded them with the greatest reverence. The Sisters' rings, blessed at the profession, she devoted to ecclesiastical uses after their wearers' death. For a long time they were set apart to assist in furnishing means for the building of a certain church. Later, she applied them to assist another church, and when the clergyman of the former made complaint, she reimbursed him in another way.

11. We have already alluded to her preference for the contemplative life. From this inclination proceeded her ardor and perseverance in prayer. She was convinced that entrance into the interior sanctuary of God was had only by prayer. Besides the usual community prayers, at which, as far as depended on her, she was always first and last,

she said many private prayers, to which purpose she devoted part of the night. For many years, probably until her health was weakened by attacks of asthma, she was accustomed to watch in prayer till midnight between Thursday and Friday, and all night before Good Friday. A favorite prayer with her was the following of St. Mechtildis: "Most amiable Jesus! I send up to Thee the first aspiration of my heart, and fervently implore Thee graciously to receive all my actions of this day, and to purify and cleanse them in Thy most sacred Heart, offering them in union with Thy perfect actions to Thy Heavenly Father in His praise. Amen." She recited this prayer not only every morning before leaving her cell, but often during the day; and even at night, on awaking, she would repeat it in her heart and with her lips.

In imitation of Holy Church, she was accustomed to close her prayers of petition with the invocation: "Through Christ, Our Lord." Concerning this she wrote to a priest: "I believe this manner of prayer, even if offered by the most unworthy heart, must have the effect of obtaining many graces from God."

12. Excepting for the community exercises, she rarely had a free hour, as the duties of her office and business affairs took up all her time. Therefore she was the more careful not to begin any work or business before having elevated her eyes and heart to heaven for grace to perform and attend to it according to the will and for the honor of God. Even before engaging in ordinary occupations she would say to the Sisters: "Let us kneel down and

devoutly say the *Our Father*, that we may do everything well and from a pure intention." Well may we therefore say that she observed in a perfect manner the exhortation of the Lord, "that we ought always to pray," that is, either orally, or mentally, or by our work.

A note of her spiritual director, Father Bonaventure Wessendorf, informs us that she early attained to high a degree of mental prayer, and was able to recollect herself with ease to remain with affectionate attention in the presence of God. But as details are wanting, we cannot more fully describe her method.

13. Everyone having a true veneration and love for Christ will extend this venerating love and loving veneration to His saints; for Our Lord loves them not only as His dear friends, but He has impressed them with the image of His own sanctity, and made them His members, united with Him in a most intimate, loving union. To God alone, for His own sake, belongs the highest honor, love and adoration; but for this very reason we must have a corresponding veneration and love for those whom He loves, and in whom is reflected His image. There is a mystic, wonderful communion of saints that has its foundation and life in Christ, our Head. Mother Frances was profoundly imbued with this dogma. In reverence, confidence and love her faith-inspired heart was daily in spiritual communion with the whole Church triumphant and suffering, and with the members of the Church militant throughout all the world.

14. We have already mentioned her devotion to

the Immaculate Mother of God. She herself confessed that it was increased by her pilgrimage to Lourdes. Under date of November 7th, 1871, she wrote to the often mentioned Franciscan: "My heart warms within me when I think of the apparition in the grotto of Masabielle, and remember all I saw, heard and experienced there. We receive the 'Annals of Lourdes,' and they inform us that the use of the water of the blessed fountain is continually attended by miraculous cures. The arm of the Lord is not shortened, and the Blessed Virgin continues to prove herself our most loving Mother." She propagated the "Annals" in Germany, and, with the approbation of the Ordinary, had a pamphlet on Lourdes, together with a formula of consecration to the Blessed Virgin, printed and widely circulated at her own expense. She also imported large shipments of water from the miraculous fountain, which she sent, prepaid and gratis, to great distances. The alms, which she received unasked for the pamphlets and the water, she remitted to Lourdes. They amounted to a considerable sum, so that her Congregation is inscribed on the registers of Lourdes among the principal benefactors.

In a letter written by her on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, September 8th, 1855, to the afore-mentioned convert, we find the following graceful sentiments: "How beautiful is this day! It is, as it were, the dawn of our future redemption. Without the purity of the ever-blessed Virgin, the King of Heaven could not have come to us. She served Him, in a manner, as the ladder or bridge

to come to sinful mankind. Her most holy body is become the throne, the tabernacle of the Divinity. Behold, dear Mary, what a gracious patroness you have. . . . Let us become penitent, mortified, humble and pure. Let us, in imitation of her, take upon us whatever is most difficult, for the love of Our Redeemer!"

Next to her devotion to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, she had a great veneration for the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. In all her trials and difficulties she would order, and perform herself, devotions or novenas in honor of the Seven Dolors.

15. First among the saints to whom she had a special devotion ranks St. Joseph, in whose honor she was accustomed to observe the devotion of the Nine Wednesdays. Then came four Franciscan saints, viz. St. Francis, the Seraphic Father of the Order, St. Clare, his first-born daughter, the great miracle-worker St. Anthony, and St. Elisabeth, patroness of the Third Order. The predilection for St. Clare is explained by her ardent desire of exchanging the active for the contemplative life amongst her recluses. She always celebrated the feast of St. Clare, August 12, with special fervor and amid great rejoicings. To one of her confidants among the Sisters, she expressed, in her childlike simplicity, a desire of seeing St. Clare in heaven, more ardent than even that of seeing St. Francis.

Of the Apostles, St. John, "the friend of the bridegroom" (John III. 29.) as she loved to call him, was her favorite patron. From the inception of the Congregation she celebrated his feast with

marked solemnity, and was accustomed to have the "blessing of St. John" (a local practice in the Rhine provinces, consisting in the blessing of wine), partaken of by her community.

She was fond of reading the works of Ss. Gertrude and Mechtildis, and often cited passages from them. The two great penitents, St. Magdalen, and St. Margaret of Cortona, were also among her special patrons. On the feast of the former she once wrote to a religious: "To-day is the feast of the great lover of Our Divine Saviour. Implore for me a part of her penitence and love." It was probably by her influence, that in 1862, a young lady, Miss Gertrude Mettmann, founded an evening devotion, with sermon, for the feast of this saint.

Later, on reading the life of St. Margaret of Cortona in French, she conceived a great devotion to her. She endeavored to have the book translated into German. In 1863, or thereabouts, she established, in America, a special department of the Congregation, the "Penitents of St. Margaret of Cortona," for the relief of the souls in purgatory. She wrote constitutions, conformable to the rule of the Third Order, for this department. From these constitutions may be gathered, that she intended it for virgins possessed of an extraordinary spirit of penance, who, following the example of their patroness, desired to devote themselves to a retired and penitential life for the relief of the souls in purgatory. Only in exceptional cases, and after a long and severe probation, could penitents be admitted who once, more or less publicly, had strayed from the narrow path of virtue. This

department did not prove successful. It remained restricted to three Sisters, and was discontinued soon after the venerable Mother's death.

16. The great veneration of St. Francis for priests is well known. He regarded in them Christ, Our Lord, and said: "I do not wish to consider sin in them, because I discern the Son of God in them." (*Testament of St. Francis.*) In this respect, Mother Frances imitated him most faithfully. She beheld Our Saviour in every priest; she venerated even the poorest and youngest of them, and asked for his blessing. She prayed often for them, that all might receive the special graces and assistance of the Holy Ghost for the fulfilment of the holy and difficult duties of their sacred calling. She would not suffer the Sisters to criticise in her presence the infirmities of individual priests, or the imperfections of their sermons. She declared that those would receive great graces, who in simple faith regarded in every priest his high sacerdotal character, venerated Christ in all, and prayed for them that they might fulfil the duties imposed on them by their dignity. She felt quite happy if it was in her power to do an act of charity for a priest, and did so on many occasions. We cite one instance out of many. A Belgian priest was killed in a railroad accident near Aix la Chapelle. His corpse was brought to the morgue in the old Dominican building. When Mother Frances was informed of this, she was greatly pained, and observed that such treatment was not in harmony with the respect due to sacerdotal dignity. She sent a Sister to the authorities for permission to take charge of the

corpse, but succeeded only after many difficulties. Then she had it clad in priest's vestments, and had the obsequies solemnly performed, at which all the Sisters prayerfully assisted.

17. From the above examples may be gathered, that Mother Frances had received "eyes of the heart" (Ephes. I. 18.) as mentioned by St. Paul, spiritual eyes, without which man walks in the dark concerning things divine and supernatural. For, to speak with St. Bonaventure, as man notices with his bodily eyes what is *around* him, and with the eyes of the intellect what is *within* him, thus he discerns with the eye of contemplation, enlightened by faith and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, what is *above* him, viz. God, and what relates to God. This eye, since the fall of Adam, is blind; sight will be fully restored to it in the light of heavenly glory: but also on earth it may be regained in a measure by a soul purified and inflamed with grace and faith, and devoted to contemplation. The essential predisposition is a contrite and humble heart, convinced of its own darkness and sinfulness, and the earnest endeavor to follow Christ crucified. "He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John VIII. 12.)

CHAPTER IV.

Her Confidence in, her loving Abandonment to God.

1. The divine power of true faith, if not held captive by sin, produces hope and charity, two other divine virtues, two glorious heavenly flowers,

without which there is no peace for the human heart here below. It is demonstrated by the fact that Mother Frances, from her earliest youth sought not the things of this world, and with increasing years died more and more to her natural inclinations by leading a true life of sacrifice, that she found a greater good, and a love for whose sake no sacrifice was too great, for which the greatest sacrifice is too little. More and more her heart was drawn to the one Supreme Good, more and more was her life transformed, so that she impressed others with the sense of belonging to the number of those whose "conversation is in heaven." (Philip. III. 20.)

2. Confidence in God is one of her most conspicuous traits. In her undertakings she would not waver for even a moment, if she but recognized the will of God, even if all human aid was wanting. She would proceed, as it were, with closed eyes, relying on the infinite power and goodness of the Great King, to Whom means can never be wanting to help out of all difficulties the poor mortal that depends on Him. She reduced to practice the words of the Lord: "Be not solicitous," in a manner that might seem reckless to such as look merely to human means. She did not provide for the future. Trusting in her Father in Heaven, she was as unconcerned for the future as the birds of the air; and this, with her, was an effect of virtue.

3. From this confidence in God sprang her munificence, and her courage in all great difficulties. Even when herself in need of money, she would donate large sums for good purposes with an equanimity that sometimes appeared presumptuous.

In some instances she acted almost rashly, but always trusting in God, Whose will she believed to have discerned by an inner impulse. And as far as is known, she was never disappointed. She would severely reprimand Sisters that permitted themselves to become despondent in their difficulties; for example, when, in consequence of the May Laws, collections were prohibited. Her principle was, abandon yourself blindly to divine Providence, but beware of forestalling it. This latter is to be remembered well, in order that one may not make great mistakes. Therefore we find, on the other hand, that she often hesitated long before an undertaking, praying fervently and making novenas, and having prayers said and novenas made by the Sisters, in order to be assured of the will of God. The following is an instance: She greatly desired to have, before her death, the final approbation of the Holy See for her Constitutions, especially after they had been approved for a time. Amid incessant prayer she prepared everything, but could not arrive at a decision, so that she finally concluded to leave the matter in abeyance. When one of the Sisters, cognizant of the state of the affair, urged her to have it settled, she replied tearfully: "Do not urge me in this matter. I cannot proceed; God does not require it of me. One must not forestall grace."

4. She was very fond of the book, "Abandonment to Providence," by P. Caussade, S. J., and had it spread widely in the Congregation and out of it. She desired that the Sisters should daily put in practice the holy precepts of this book, especially

when sent from one convent to another, sometimes no small trial for the female mind. Once, when handing this book to a Sister, she said: "Make use of it, and practise what it teaches, and you shall want nothing more to become a saint."—If the hairs of our head are watched over by Providence, if all things turn out well for those that love God—then everyone that loves God must say with the author of the "Imitation of Christ": "O Lord, it cannot but be good, whatever Thou shalt do by me." (B. III. 17, 2.) He will abandon himself without reserve to God. This being true of all Christians, Mother Frances regarded it as still more the duty of religious, because they renounce their own will by the vow of obedience. Therefore they must guard themselves especially against withdrawing, so to say, from the guidance of Providence, by trying to influence the decisions of their Superiors concerning them in accord with their own inclinations and judgments. Such blindness greatly displeased Mother Frances, and when she remarked anything similar in a Sister, she would call her attention to the great damage that is sustained by such a flight from the cross.

5. She herself had long been accustomed to exercise herself daily in conformity to the will of God, in doing and suffering, in great and small things. Shortly before Christmas, 1860, she wrote: "The faithful accomplishment of Thy holy will, O my Redeemer, shall henceforth be my daily nourishment. I offer myself to Thy divine pleasure with all the sentiments and affections of my heart. Let me derive the necessary self-denial and generous

courage from Thy adorable Heart." Thus she could write truthfully in September, 1864, to her confidant, the often mentioned Franciscan: "As it has become, with the grace of God, a principle with me, to seek and love above all the holy will of God, I willingly and easily submit to His dispositions, and say with all my heart: 'The Lord gave and the Lord took away; as it hath pleased the Lord so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord.' (Job I. 21.) Meanwhile, do not believe that I do not feel the burden of the cross which God imposes on me. Just the reverse. But in grateful reverence I kiss the smiting hand of God."

During the whole course of her life there were numerous occasions that gave her opportunity of applying the above principle in practice, and practise it she did. Not to mention personal afflictions and sicknesses, her heart was severely wounded by the death of persons dear to her, and by that of young Sisters, whose loss was deeply felt in the Congregation. But only once, at the announcement of the sudden death of Sister Dominica, did she seem overwhelmed, as related above. Yet, after a few minutes, her strength of spirit triumphed by faith over the feelings of nature, and she submitted, in love of the divine will, to the painful but adorable dispensation of God. At another trial, which related to her personally, and of which we have no details, but which according to human judgment must result greatly to her disadvantage, she was, according to the testimony of her spiritual director, Father Bonaventure Wessendorf, entirely resigned to the will of God,

and remained quite calm, trusting that God would bring the matter to a prosperous issue, and her confidence was rewarded.

6. To submit joyfully to the will of God in severe losses and trials is impossible without a high degree of love. Sufferings and misfortunes are in themselves abhorrent and repulsive to nature. In their relation to the divine will they present themselves in quite a different form, because the will of God, being essentially God Himself, is infinitely amiable. When a soul loving God considers suffering in its relation to God's will, the natural bitterness of pain yields to the surpassing sweetness of this supreme good. In other words, in the hard and bitter shell of temporal suffering the faithful soul discerns the holy will of God, and is thereby enabled by virtue of hope and love to break through the exterior and enjoy the rich meat, the will of God, saying with Our Saviour: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." (John IV. 34.) For to suffer for God is to nourish His love on earth; to enjoy God and possess Him nourishes His love in heaven. These sentiments are expressed in a letter written by Mother Frances on the 14th of March, 1864, to the often mentioned Franciscan: "I am calm and content, but begin to taste what St. Paul expresses in the words: 'Having a desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.' (Philip. I. 23.) Not as if I dared to believe or insinuate that I had suffered sufficiently; oh no, I am only beginning; but I feel how sweet it shall be one day to die after having calmly and courageously accepted my small portion of the cross, and

borne it according to God's most holy will to the end appointed by Him. Indeed, I feel the burden and the weight of the cross imposed upon me; but you are aware that I did not select it myself. Another, Whom I can not and will not oppose, did it, and it is but right and meet that I persevere. He Who thus willed it, will also give me the strength to carry it as long as it is His holy will. True, I am old and spent; but if it should please the Lord to relieve me of it, I think I might become a child again. Pardon me for referring thus to myself, which I ought rather to omit. Alas, human nature still asserts itself; I am not yet dead to self."

This love of the will of God exerted its power in Mother Frances to such a degree, that she would not permit herself to complain even in the most bitter sufferings, but "persevered in thanksgiving," as the Church so often repeats in her prayers. For a heart filled with the love of God it is not difficult to comply with the exhortation of the Apostle, to "bear all things, hope all things, endure all things."

7. How deeply she experienced the effects of love was demonstrated especially on days of profession, when she, with unsurpassed fervor, read to the young Sisters that sublime chapter from the "Imitation of Christ," which describes the wonderful workings of divine love. She then appeared quite transfigured with love drawn from the Heart of Jesus. She would sometimes add a few words to the lesson; for instance, "You must become martyrs of love, and must not forget that only by suffering we attain to the love of God, and only by struggles and self-denial do we make progress in

spiritual life." As the truth of her words was manifest by her own life, which was devoted solely to love, this lecture and exhortation made a lasting impression.

8. "Generous love of God impels to do great things for God, and inspires with a growing desire of perfection." (St. Francis de Sales, *Theotimus*, B. VIII. 6.) This double effect of divine love, manifest in all friends of God, was perceptible also in Mother Frances. Nothing was farther from her than to rest in self-sufficiency on supposed merits; she aspired rather to "press to the mark" (Philip. III. 14.) of still greater perfection in the exercise of love. It is certainly no small degree of love of God to fulfil, for its sake, the commandments of God and the obligations of one's vocation. Perfect love, however, does not bind itself simply to the demands of duty; it aspires to serve God by the practice of mere counsels also. It is, undeniably, a teaching of Holy Writ that, besides the precepts obligatory on all, there are many wholesome counsels to whose observance Our Lord invites his disciples. This invitation is not extended to all, and even those that are favored by it are not called upon to practice all the counsels. Individual conditions and aptitudes have to be considered. For not all counsels of Holy Scripture are intended for each individual, and for every phase of life; although, as a whole, they compose in a sublime manner the perfection of Christianity. Not to mention the special counsels, there are so many degrees of heroic practice in the virtues that are obligatory, that it surpasses the feeble strength of

common Christians to follow in them the example of great saints. Charity towards the poor and sick is a duty, but to devote one's whole life to the poor and sick like Mother Frances, and to sacrifice, as she did, everything to others, is manifestly *not* a precept of duty, and impossible to feeble human nature. The following chapters will prove that our servant of God was inspired by the Holy Ghost not only to observe the evangelical counsels, but that she practised many virtues, notably charity, poverty and humility, in a degree marvelously heroic. Her heart urged her to do great things for God, as St. Paul writes of himself: "The charity of God presseth us . . . . Christ died for all, that they also, who live, may not now live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again." (II Cor. V. 14, 15.)

9. On earth, the love of God has continual need not only of increase, but also of purification. Among the resolutions and prayers written by Mother Frances during spiritual retreats, this sentiment recurs in various forms. Thus she writes in 1867: "Purify my love for Thee, and then implant it deeply in my heart, in my soul." This purification is not accomplished without pain of the soul; "for there is no living in love without some pain or sorrow." (Imit. of Christ, B. III. 5, 7.) Here below there is no love of God without sorrow for sin, because no life on earth runs its course without faults and defects by which love is dimmed. To experience great love-sorrow for small faults is a privilege of perfect love, and a distinctive mark of the saints, who daily offered to God with bitter-

sweet tears of repentance the sacrifice of a humble and contrite heart.

We have already observed that this spirit of penitence was one of the characteristic traits of Mother Frances from her early years, and may add that she adhered to it throughout her whole life, even to her death. Not to mention the austere life she continually led in the observance of the rule of the "Order of Penance", she practised the interior virtue of penance in a high degree. She never made peace with those imperfections and frailties that cling ineradicably to human nature. She was not content to accuse herself of them sorrowfully in confession, and to perform devoutly the penance imposed for them by the priest, but she was wont to inflict severe penances on herself. In early years, her vivacious temper and her great zeal for the glory of God would sometimes impel her to impatience, and to corrections of Sisters' faults that afterwards appeared harsh to her. She would immediately correct these outbursts, as appears from her memorandum-book. According to her confessor's testimony, she would sometimes impose on herself extraordinarily severe penances for them. In imitation of St. Francis, she would sometimes, in former years, command a very pious and simple-minded Sister secretly to chastise her, and the Sister, thinking herself obliged to do so, complied, though against her own will.

10. Another example of her severity towards herself is the following: A gentleman and lady of her acquaintance visited her on their wedding tour. It was noon, and when the bell was rung for the

Angelus, she neglected to interrupt the conversation to say the customary prayer. After the visitors had left, she went to the refectory to join the Sisters. There this omission caused her such confusion that she left the table, denied herself the meal, and immediately wrote to the gentleman, acknowledging her fault and asking pardon for the scandal she had given. This act of self-humiliation to make amends for the omission of a practice by no means a precept, greatly edified her callers. Not satisfied with this reparation, she accused herself of it also before the Sisters at the next recreation.

11. For every sin we owe reparation to God*), or a corresponding atonement. So penetrated was Mother Frances with this truth, that she continually practised it, not only in reference to her own frailties, but also on the occasion of faults committed by others. She did not censure the Sisters' faults without taking blame also to herself. The practice of self-accusation is not only the beginning of salvation, as we see in the Good Thief, but also a condition on which depends our advancement in perfection. From various sources we know that Mother Frances was accustomed to impose little penances

*) This is a principle mentioned often by Ss. Augustine, Thomas and Bonaventure. On it is founded the Catholic doctrine of atonement by Christ, which, though it was more than sufficient for all the sins of the world, nevertheless does not absolve the individual from making himself a participant in the atonement of Christ by his own works of penance in order to receive remission of the guilt of sin. Even then there remain temporal punishments to undergo. But all Christian penance has its effect through the merits and the atonement of Christ. For as the Council of Trent (Sess. VI. 8, 13.) teaches, Christians must bring forth worthy fruits of penance by participation in the atoning Passion of Christ, "in Whom we live, in Whom we merit, in Whom we atone."

on herself immediately when she noticed a fault committed by one of the Sisters. She would, for instance, kiss the floor or say a prayer. Special mention is made of her custom, that when a Sister came too late for the morning service, she would, in reparation, not receive holy Communion at the usual time, during the first Mass, but an hour later.

How painfully she felt the faults of others, and the necessity of atoning for them, is apparent from a letter of January 7th, 1864, to the often mentioned Franciscan. She writes, that "a good and excellent Sister had committed some rather grievous fault, though not of a nature to give scandal to the world," and continues: "I am like a beast of burden, oppressed on all sides by crosses and sufferings. Our Lord touches me in my most sensitive spot. In a word, the sufferings come from within the community. I am told that the Congregation possesses a good spirit, and nevertheless offences were committed against God, that stabbed me to the heart, and moreover, by a good, excellent soul. . . . Do pray for us, and serve Our Divine Lord the more zealously, love Him the more ardently, to make reparation for our unfaithfulness and wickedness. Oh, how the Lord knows how to humiliate, to bow down, to crush! All sins committed in the Congregation affect me as my own; it seems to me that they are all caused through my fault. I am not discouraged, but humiliated. From all my heart I say to the Lord: 'It is good for me, that Thou hast humbled me.'" (Ps. CXVIII. 71.)

12. We close this chapter with the words of St. Bernard: "If we desire to follow Christ our

Head, we must never desert penance and the cross. Like Him, we must persevere till the Spirit speaks to us 'that we may rest from our labors.' (Apoc. XIV. 13.) On the cross we must remain; on the cross we must die, and be taken down from it by the hands of another, not descend from it by means of our own negligence."

CHAPTER V.

Her active Charity.

1. The virtue most conspicuous in Mother Frances was charity. In it she commanded the admiration of persons of every condition. Her generosity and patience achieved grand results for the relief of distress, and with Job (XXXI. 18.) she could say: "From my infancy mercy grew up with me." Hers was not a charity of easily aroused sentiment, but one proved by works, according to the words of St. John: "Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (I John III. 18.) Sentimental charity, without effects and works, is spurious, false.

The only aim, happiness and honor of the life of Mother Frances was the service of Jesus Christ in His poor, sick and destitute. As soon as she was at liberty to follow the promptings of her heart, she devoted herself with holy ardor to the practice of all spiritual and corporal works of mercy for which she had an opportunity. To devote everything she possessed, and her own person, to the service of God in His poor was the governing idea and plan of her life and her Congregation. With

what energy and spirit of sacrifice she followed this vocation the reader had occasion to learn and admire in former chapters. To show yet more clearly what this grand woman did for the relief of social misery, and how she did it, we must add some particulars.

2. After leaving her family, she began the foundation of her Congregation destitute of human means, but with a heart rich in its incomparable spirit of sacrifice, faith and confidence in God. To assist the poor and sick, to furnish them with proper food, was the first work to which she devoted her personal services with youthful zeal; in it she continued later through her daughters, until the instigators of the merciless "May Laws" were able to boast that this work of charity was one of their first victims. Relief and service of the poor were, and continue to be, the principal charities to which she devoted her Congregation. The recollection of the misery of the poor followed her through life, and became most conspicuous in seasons of famine. On the 22d of November, 1851, she wrote to the Sisters in the lately established branch house at Bonn: "The destitution of the poor will be extraordinary this winter, and you must be intent on relieving it as far as possible for many, very many. Remember dear St. Elisabeth, so distinguished for her charity, and eminent in it as St. Francis was eminent in the love of God. Let us then strive to attain at least a small share of both, but above all, very much of the spirit of our holy Father."

Besides the fatiguing work of collecting and dispensing the contributions of charity to the poor,

and of assisting them in their homes, she provided, in her houses, a refuge for a great number of homeless females. Especially in the mother-house at Aix la Chapelle hundreds of poor girls found, in the course of years, food, clothing, education and safety from the corruption abounding in great cities. Persons also of a more abandoned class, seeking reformation, were provided for in the Dominican building. In a manner, each house of the Congregation was a refuge where at least some poor creature found a haven of rest in the storms of life.

3. As it is not our intention to describe the ministry of her Congregation for the promotion of social reform, we confine ourselves to the narration of some works of charity performed by Mother Frances herself. It is impossible to calculate, even superficially, the great sums she expended during her life for the benefit of the suffering, and for charitable purposes of every kind; for she performed her good works in secret. To give was a joy to her, which was doubly great if she could do it unobserved. We can say without exaggeration that for *religious* purposes alone, especially for Missions, and amongst those for the German Mission at Havre, for the foundation of convents of other Orders, and of ecclesiastical institutions in general, over one hundred thousand marks (the German mark is equivalent to 23.08 cents) passed through her hands. A great part of this sum came from Sisters of her Congregation, whom she counselled to devote their means to the purposes mentioned. Often not inconsiderable sums were placed at her disposal by benefactors who knew her unselfishness

and prudence. In such cases her generosity induced her to help others first, and to think of her Congregation last.

4. The assistance of poor students preparing for the sacred ministry was one of her favorite charities, in which she exhibited great tact to prevent embarrassment. Once, when a student, instead of making application directly to her, called for a Sister who happened to be absent, and left without making known his errand, she had him sought out in the city and generously assisted him. Not a few students became good priests through means furnished by her. A priest who could not follow his vocation to the religious state because his mother was dependent on him, she assisted by caring for her and attending to her wants till she died.

Her liberality towards impoverished families, especially such as had fallen from a higher social grade, knew no bouuds. A Sister tells of a case, when Mother Frances sent, through a priest, six thousand marks to such a family. In such cases she would often give a well-filled purse to a Sister, saying: "Dear Sister, make haste and bring the entire contents to the family N. I cannot take dinner as long as I believe that this family is suffering from want." The author himself testifies that she received an impoverished gentleman, formerly a *virtuoso*, into one of her institutions, and provided for him till his death.

5. She was, moreover, very solicitous that persons whom she had received into her institutions should be clothed and cared for in a proper manner, and that they were supplied with everything they

could reasonably desire. She furnished them with good books, and surprised them from time to time with little extra comforts. How delicately she would do this may be gathered from the following instance. She once sent a watch to the Superioress of a branch house, with the instruction: "Give it to Mr. N., and in order not to embarrass him, place it secretly on his table, so that St. Anthony shall let him find it in the morning." — Once, during a visit to one of her institutions, a somewhat feeble-minded inmate, a Protestant, expressed a desire for trout. She immediately sent for the fishes, and when they had been brought told a Sister: "Bring them to good, feeble Henry, and may he enjoy them." Altogether, she provided as far as possible for the wants of the poor, and took special pains to have their food well prepared. It was a great treat for her to assist at the distribution of the victuals. When she arrived at one of her houses about noon, she would immediately take a hand in it, cheerfully and zealously assisting in this work of charity despite the fatigue of the journey. For the children, and the other inmates of the house, she would always have some little present, for instance, a small picture, or some refreshment. No wonder she was idolized by them.

6. Of course she often experienced base ingratitude and deception; but it seemed to have no effect on her — generally she would only smile. She did not expect human gratitude for her charities, but regarded only the glory of God, and the eternal reward promised by Him.

There is only one instance on record, when she

allowed herself, in a shocking case of ingratitude, to say a few words in reproof and exhortation. She had for years conferred great benefits on a family, by pecuniary help and by caring for the education of the children. Later, this family made on her entirely unfounded claims, and threatened to have recourse to law if she did not pay a certain sum. Rather than defend her rights in court, Mother Frances surrendered them and paid the money. But with an earnest and prophetic mien she said: "Beware of divine retribution; it is threatened to all who unjustly oppress the poor children of St. Francis." And, in fact, this family was soon visited by a series of misfortunes by which it was completely ruined.

7. Her charity and generosity towards the poor was shown in a very interesting manner every year on the eve of her saint's day, the feast of St. Francis. On the afternoon preceding this feast the poor alone were admitted to her presence. Crowds of them would come, mostly such as had been recipients of her bounty, to congratulate her. She would listen to the recital of their troubles, console them and dismiss them in the end with an alms in the shape of a piece of money. It being widely known that Mother Frances knew no greater joy than to give abundantly, her friends in Aix la Chapelle and other places, and the Superioresses of the branch houses would send money to the stewardess of the mother-house for the purpose. These gifts sometimes amounted to a considerable sum. When the author once was in the mother-house on an occasion of this kind, the stewardess informed him that

Mother Frances had on that day distributed over one thousand marks to the poor. Thus she laid up a treasure in heaven by the hands of the poor. She told the author that "the afternoon of the 3d of October is the most pleasant of all the year for me." Thus was fulfilled in her the word of the Lord: "It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive." (Acts XX. 35.) The experience, recuring so often in the lives of the saints, that those that give receive in return, is effectually demonstrated in her. The more she gave with her right hand, and without reckoning and calculating, the more Divine Providence replenished her left hand with means for further generosity. Thus we see in her the confirmation of that mystery so incomprehensible to the children of the world, that alms given for God's sake is more profitable to the giver than to the receiver.

8. The charity with which she ministered to the sick during her earlier years was mentioned repeatedly. When, in later years, her duties, and obedience, no longer permitted her, as a rule, to attend personally to the sick, this was a painful sacrifice to her. She could not bring herself to give up entirely this favorite employment. She then would select patients suffering from the most loathsome diseases. A few examples may prove this. She had been forbidden to watch with the sick at night, except by permission of her Assistant, Sister Joanna. One evening, after the Sisters had retired, there came a call for a Sister to watch with a sick person. When the door-keeper informed Mother Frances of it, she so persuadingly pleaded

for permission, that Sister Joanna consented. Then quickly getting ready, she made haste to leave, lest the permission might be revoked. To the door-keeper, our informant, she said: "I am so happy to be permitted to go; I feel like a votary of pleasure going to a ball." Next morning she returned, was as usual the first in the oratory, and attended to her duties the same as ever during the day. Whilst visiting at the branch house in Bonn, she asked to be allowed to sit up one night with a sick woman. Next day, the woman's husband came to thank the Superioress that she had sent so amiable and competent a Sister, who thought of everything; she had even remembered to prepare his breakfast before he went to work. — Even in later years she would not be dissuaded from binding up the loathsome wounds of patients, especially of such as suffered from cancer. She would take the soiled linen to the convent, wash it herself, and allow no one to help her, saying half pleasantly, half seriously: "No, you are not worthy. Let me first see which one of you will begin to strive earnestly for perfection." After a while she would permit some Sisters to help her in reward of their dutifulness.

9. We add a few remarks, taken from a long account of Rev. Canon Buschmann in Aix la Chapelle, to supplement the instances already related of her fearlessness and charity in the cholera and smallpox hospitals. In March, 1866, this good priest was attacked by the smallpox, and was nursed by Mother Frances. He writes: "Without having in the least expressed a wish concerning it

myself, Mother Frances placed two rooms at my disposal, and had me nursed there so well for three weeks, that I was able to say Mass again as early as Easter Sunday. I shall never forget the sympathy and aid which she gave me. She visited me twice every day, morning and evening, sometimes even oftener. She would then give me double relief, an orange to cool my parched palate, and what was still more welcome, words of consolation and encouragement that can proceed only from a heart filled with the most ardent love of God. As to her other virtues, I was edified mostly by her equanimity of temper, joined with a childlike cheerfulness and continual serenity of mind betoking a profound peace in God."

10. Her charity to the needy of all conditions was manifest on every occasion. To serve and help others was, in her, an innate quality, and just as native to her was her inclination to give. Whenever she found anybody, however lowly, in distress, she would immediately offer her assistance. Thus she once helped some poor peasants to carry their sand-bags to the city. On another occasion she went quite a distance out of her way to bring a girl to the place whither she desired to go, and even carried her satchel. She assisted a crippled man across the street, and carried an old gentleman's umbrella and great ivory-headed cane: all little services, but emanations of great charity.

11. According to an observation of St. Bonaventure, it is a property of charity to increase in proportion to the greatness of distress. The faithful eye of Mother Frances detected in the most destitute,

and often most repulsive poor, the person of Our Divine Redeemer and future Judge exhorting her to ministrations of charity. Therefore she preferred intercourse with them. In travelling, she would always take third class passage, though she suffered not a little in consequence of vitiated air, tobacco fumes and noise. To urgent invitations of railway officials or other persons to exchange her place for better accommodations she would reply: "Our place is among the poor." These are little acts of self-denial, but great acts of charity, because originating from the heart and from a lively faith. Man is but too much inclined to regard his temporal welfare, and yet — and this is, alas, regarded but too little — the soul's welfare ought to be our highest concern. If we truly loved our soul, we would understand that we best care for its welfare by restricting the care of our body to what is necessary, and by striving to minister to Christ, Our Lord, by charity towards the suffering.

12. It is a word admirably exalted, consoling to the true Christian, crushing to the worldly-minded— that word which the Eternal Judge of the world will pronounce in His majesty, accompanying it with His blessing and His curse: "Then shall the king say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just

answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and feed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in; or naked and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison and came to Thee? And the king answering shall say to them: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of my least brethren, you did it to me. Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me not in; naked, and you covered me not; sick and in prison, and you did not visit me. Then they also shall answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee? Then He shall answer them, saying: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me." (Matth. XXV. 34–46.) The reward and the punishment are both vindicated in the fundamental principle: "As long as you did it, or did it not, to one of these least, you did it, or did it not, unto me."

What a mystery! The Son of God, become poor and a sufferer for us, shall manifest Himself at the portals of eternity as the great Judge of the world, Who for this life transferred His claim on our charity to the poor and suffering, by whose hands He continually exacted the tribute of charity we owe Him. He will pronounce the sentence accord-

ingly as we have, or have not, paid this tribute to Him in His members.

CHAPTER VI.

Her Zeal for Souls.

1. "This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." (I John IV. 21.) Now, nobody loves either God or his brother, who does not love his fellow-man's soul and salvation more than his body and temporal welfare. Indifference towards the salvation of others is a mark of spiritual death, as true zeal for souls is an indication of Christian charity.

As to this charity towards souls, there would, perhaps, be few even amongst zealous priests not abashed, and at the same time encouraged, when contemplating the deeds and achievements of Mother Frances. On the one hand, she had a preference for the most abandoned souls; on the other, she feared no danger, and found no sacrifice too great when a soul was in peril.

2. This divinely inspired charity impelled her to devote herself heroically to the work of assisting criminals condemned to death. When she heard that a criminal was to be executed in Aix la Chapelle, or in any other city of the Rhine provinces, she deemed it her divinely appointed duty to assist him at the severe ordeal, preparing him for a Christian death. She would obtain permission to minister to him during the night before the execution, and to watch with him in prayer. Her irresistible charity would succeed in imparting con-

solation and resignation to the condemned culprit, and in inducing him to prepare, with the help of the priest, for a worthy reception of the sacraments. She then accompanied him to the place of execution, remained with him on the scaffold, prayed with and for him, and would not depart till his head had been severed by the executioner's ax. Usually her clothing would be bespattered with the victim's blood, and she would return from such scenes, so trying to her charitable heart, quite unnerved and exhausted. She is said to have assisted at seven or eight executions, to the great consolation of the poor criminals. All of these, except one, died with edifying contrition and resignation; and even the one of whose conversion she was not sure, received the sacraments.

In 1855, she wrote to the often mentioned convert: "I come from the prison, where the criminals are to be executed to-day, and am almost overcome by exhaustion and sympathy. . . . What a grace these two poor wretches received! They are both converted with all their heart. What consolation, what helps our holy religion affords! How peaceful is even the most horrible death if we are resigned to the will of God! Pray for those that fell victims to justice to-day. I think, yes, I confidently hope that the Lord has been merciful to them."

3. Another class of most miserable social outcasts, surrounded at the same time by the greatest dangers to their souls, are the prisoners. Much as has been done by a humane spirit for the bodily relief of prisoners, nobody can truthfully assert that prisons are really reformatories. It is even

doubtful whether the reduction of penalties has advanced the reform of criminals. Usually, convicts return from the so-called reformatories not reformed, but hardened criminals. — Especially did the condition of female convicts distress Mother Frances. The words of Our Lord: "I was in prison, and you did not visit me," (Matth. XXV. 43.) had been deeply impressed on her mind, and therefore she willingly took charge of the sick female prisoners in Aix la Chapelle, when the authorities offered this difficult and seemingly thankless task to her. And the self-sacrificing charity of the Sisters had not a few gratifying results of their ministrations to show during the years they were permitted to continue them, though the obstacles placed in their way were many. Mother Frances was intent on supplementing by diligent prayer what she lacked in means, and rejoiced at the least success. Under date of January 3d, 1852, she relates to Sister Bonaventure, who had been engaged for some time in this kind of work, that a certain convict had been mightily moved by grace and would in all probability be converted. "We prayed diligently for her, and shall continue to pray. Remember her too. This conversion would have a great influence on all the female prisoners; and how the Lord would be glorified by it!"

4. We have already mentioned what she did from the beginning of her career for that other class of unfortunates, abandoned women. She tried also to imbue the Sisters with her own charity for these lost sheep of the Good Shepherd. Once, when about to send a young, refined Sister to the old

Dominican building to engage in this naturally repulsive task, she asked her if it seemed difficult to her. The Sister replied: "Dear Mother, I go willingly, but I cannot help it if it does seem difficult to me." The venerable Mother rejoined: "Remember, that Our Saviour says of Himself that the Good Shepherd left ninety-nine sheep in the desert and went in search of the one that was lost — and here there are so many!" On this occasion she intended also, as she informed another Sister, to let this young and inexperienced Sister have an opportunity of learning to know the weakness and misery of the human heart, and have compassion for it. Her zeal for the conversion of these poor creatures never flagged, despite very discouraging experiences. On the other hand, good results were not wanting. Wherever there was an opportunity, she would not rest until she had tried to open a way to rescue the lost sheep. Once, in Cologne, she found an abandoned young woman, with a child in her arms, wandering through the streets. She joined her, and tried to induce her to reform, sweetly conversing with and exhorting her.

She influenced personally, or through the Sisters, not a few persons that lived in concubinage, to have their union ratified by the Church, or to separate. Providence often led abandoned souls to her by extraordinary circumstances, so that she might lend them a helping hand and win her way to their hearts by acts of charity, kindness and benevolence; and the more neglected and repulsive such persons were, the more agreeable they would be to her. She would try to fulfil even quite unreasonable

demands, if it was in her power, thus illustrating the words of the Apostle: "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (I Cor. XIII. 7.) Imitating St. Francis, who by humility and charity converted a robber, whom the legend knows by the name of Wolf, Mother Frances at various times won souls of sick persons until then quite callous. Notably two instances of this are related, that of a very wicked and querulous old woman, and that of a depraved old Jew.

5. Whosoever possesses the precious treasure of grace and appreciates its value, can not but wish this same blessing to, and implore it for all men, doing his best to obtain it for them; and to hate, on the contrary, all wickedness. Peace to man, war to wickedness, is the watchword of charity. Also, everyone that dwells in the God-given light of full truth will feel impelled, in the same measure as he loves and esteems this truth, to pray and strive that all the world come forth from the darkness of error into the wonderful divine light of true faith; for it is a property of charity to share its treasures with others. We adore this charitable zeal in the Good Shepherd, the Redeemer of the world, we find it in the apostles, in the holy martyrs, and in all holy souls. — Very different from this true love of God and man are two manifestations of our days, falsely claiming the name of charity, and assuming a great role in these times. Tolerance is one of the boasts of our days, but it is in reality a toleration which, being indifferent to truth or falsehood, willingly compromises with

every error. But let truth, namely the Church of of God, appear before its eyes, and lo! it calumniates, it rages, it persecutes! This false toleration transfers the sufferance of the erring person indispensable in civil life, to the interior sentiments concerning the highest interests of God and the soul; its essence is indifference towards error and truth. According to the doctrine of the Church, it is by no means sufficient simply to tolerate the erring person without loving him; but we are bound to love him with all our heart, whilst hating sin and error in every shape.

Another extreme is bitter, partisan proselytism. Our Saviour condemned it, saying: "Woe to you, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves." (Matth. XXIII. 15.) The root of such an unholy proceeding is not true love of God and the neighbor, but blinded self-esteem, and proud contempt for those holding different views. From so corrupt a root there cannot grow wholesome fruit; false zeal is indiscreet in the means it selects; it is usually content with apparent success and glories in it; it demonstrates its intolerance as soon as mention is made of the Catholic Church, and of Catholics.

6. The zeal for souls which animated Mother Frances was of a very different type. Love of truth, and of God, Who is the Truth, and charity for souls, for whom she ardently desired and implored the happiness and grace of Catholic faith and life, was the mainspring of her zeal for souls.

And it was this very charity that made her most discreet, sincere and circumspect in her intercourse with persons of other religious denominations. She wearied nobody with explanations; on the contrary, as long as she had reason to believe that a person had no doubts concerning his creed, she would not even touch on controverted points. In her charities she made no discrimination, never inquiring whether the applicant was Catholic, Protestant or infidel, except perhaps that she would show greater charity where personal destitution was joined with spiritual misery.

These profound and pious sentiments explain the happy results and blessed fruits of her zeal. Scarcely ever a non-Catholic made her acquaintance without being attracted by the nobility and beauty of her soul, and filled with esteem, even with admiration for her. In this highly favored woman non-Catholics saw embodied the tenets of Catholic faith in their noble and true form, and this had a greater effect than the most learned polemics, or the dead letter of learned books. Religious errors, once they have taken root in families or larger circles, and are supported by the authority of tradition, false as it may be, can not be eradicated by means of the dead letter of books; much less can supernatural truth in its full meaning be gained from them alone. Light and strength must come from above to infuse it, and, according to the usual plan of Providence, its diffusion is also advanced by means of living books, that is, by persons in whom truth is fully and clearly embodied. Mother Frances made this impression on non-Catholics

with whom she was brought into relations, and it often happened that conversation would turn to religious subjects. Then, as soon as she perceived that not worldly motives, but a desire for the truth and for the grace of Christ were the motives, her zeal would be inflamed; she would besiege Heaven with prayers, and was ready for every sacrifice, to facilitate a return to the true Church of God — a decision which to many includes no small difficulties — and to confirm them after their conversion in the faith and in virtue.

In 1855, she wrote to a good convert: "Every time I think of you, I thank the Lord with fervent love for the great things He accomplished in you. Remain grateful to Him all your life. I love you dearly here on earth: how shall we love each other in heaven if we both have done our duty here below: I as a religious, you in the state to which God calls you — both of us good, zealous Catholics!"

The number of those whom she received, in the mother-house alone, for instruction under the direction of a priest, and who experienced her charity before and after their conversion is not small; at all events it amounts to one hundred, the third part of whom were of the Jewish persuasion. With few exceptions, they excelled later in a religious and moral life, thus proving that their conversion was sincere.

7. Her preference for and zeal in the conversion of Jews was mentioned before. This zeal was not extinguished by the sad experience she had with two Jewish converts in the very beginning of the Congregation, but gained rather in ardor and

enlightenment. Our readers will remember her vow at the grotto of Lourdes, made in thanksgiving for the restoration of her health, to do everything possible for the conversion of Jews. This vow she religiously kept. She wrote a series of letters to one of her Jewish converts, who was so deeply affected at the death of Mother Frances, that she fell grievously ill. Another was received by Mother Frances among the Sisters, but only on condition that she first convert three of her former co-religionists. Once she related to the author the conversion of a Jewish family, telling how a son of this family ardently desiring baptism in a dangerous illness, was strictly guarded by two Jews, but nevertheless had the grace of receiving baptism a short time before his death. His old mother held most tenaciously to her error; all at once, by a miracle of grace, she was enlightened during a visit to the mother-house, and henceforth defended the Catholic faith so zealously and successfully, that several Jews were converted.

8. As a matter of course, and as the order of charity demands, Mother Frances also showed her zeal with regard to Catholics, and this not only to preserve them from evil, but also to lead them on from good to better, and to perfection. How she fulfilled her duty in this respect concerning the Sisters shall be shown in the following chapters. Her sentiments on this subject are mentioned in a letter to her spiritual director, dated January 25th, 1862: "It always causes me a great deal of trouble when I perceive that those who ought to be specially intent on sanctifying themselves, do not

make use of the graces offered them, or even put them to a bad use. Nevertheless, I do not become disturbed or lose interior peace thereat, which formerly sometimes was the case; but I seek to humble myself and to make reparation *for* and *with* the Sisters. If I then remember what Our Divine Saviour must have suffered in view of our sins, my personal, or purely natural sorrow vanishes, or changes to compassion with the Redeemer agonizing and sweating blood on account of our sins. Indeed, we must feel our cross interiorly and exteriorly, in order to learn to know, love and conform ourselves to Our Divine Saviour. I received much light and sweetness from the Lord during these days. I do not know why I inform you of it; but you may see thereby that the Lord still treats me as a child, refusing me the nourishment of adults. But I am willing to take up His cross."

9. Whosoever was of good will could not but feel an impulse to do good when conversing with her. Many priests and religious testify to this. This effect, however, was not so much to be ascribed to her words, as to the impression she made by her pure and noble personality, in which were manifest a higher life and endeavor, so to say, a reflex of a supernatural world. She was far from playing at preaching, or dealing in unctuous phrases. In the presence of priests she was very reticent, rather intent on learning than on teaching. Clergymen had to be well known to her before she would permit herself, in conversation with them, any expression relating to the love of God. Yet, the following sentiments are contained in a letter to a sick

priest, a religious, with whom she was intimately acquainted.

"I deeply feel the many difficulties by which you are surrounded at present; but a look to the love of the Divine Heart will make them easier. Reflect on the sentiments of this adorable Heart. They are sentiments of the most ardent zeal for the glory of His Father, sentiments of the most fervent love for us, and of desire to save us and to render us perfect. Oh, that we knew how to conform ourselves to this Model! How soon we should be changed! Our Lord intimated unmistakably to you that you should be intent on thinking, speaking and acting after His example, thus to become interiorly like Him, and outwardly to be His counterpart by showing His spirit. The Lord has done much already: acknowledge it gratefully, and continue to receive in equanimity everything from the hand of God, and to correspond faithfully with the impulses of grace. A time will come when you shall thank the Lord and praise His name for all you have to undergo now."

CHAPTER VII.

Her Humility and Mortification.

1. The praise of her charity was on the lips of all who knew Mother Frances, because the effects of this virtue were obvious and manifest everywhere. Enlightened priests, however, praised in her another virtue, and gave it the first place, a virtue that remains hidden in the interior, and is noticed by few. The proud superstructure of a

palace is apparent to all eyes, but the deep foundation, often the most difficult part of the work, is not thought of. It was the virtue of humility, for which Mother Frances was most signally eminent. The author often heard others say of her: "Mother Frances is thoroughly humble. In spite of her great gifts and works she makes nothing of herself." If humility were but an exterior practice, and consisted only in humble words and modest demeanor, its exercise would be an easy one. But its seat is in the inmost recesses of the soul; it pervades the spirit with a bright light of truth, and places the will in its true relation to God, to self and to fellow-man. It renders to God what is God's, namely everything good and all honor, and to man what is man's, namely, his nothingness, guilt and lowliness. In this there lies a species of spiritual death, against which nature rebels. Without a special illumination, nobody comprehends and practises the suggestive word of the Apostle: "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. VI. 3.)

2. From the information concerning the childhood of Mother Frances contained in our First Book, it is apparent that God discovered to her soul at an uncommonly early age the secret abysses of her nothingness and sinfulness, and filled her heart with sentiments of sorrow, of her own unworthiness, and with a rare spirit of penance. In this feeling of self-abasement she did not permit herself to be bribed by the brilliancy of her accomplishments, nor to be elated by the praises of men; on the contrary, she deemed herself, on account of her

faults, common to the age of childhood, worse than other children, and felt bound to make reparation to God by severe acts of penance for her supposed grievous sins. This higher light concerning self accompanied her through life, and was on the one hand her protection against the most dangerous enemy of the soul, self-complacent and self-extolling pride, and on the other hand the foundation of higher graces and virtues.

From the expressions of humility hitherto related of her, the kind reader may have gathered, that she considered all the good she did as an undeserved gift of God, which imposed upon her the debt of gratitude and of serving God with renewed zeal. For the more the gifts of God, the greater our obligations towards Him. Among the prayers in her memorandum-book there is an aspiration written in 1867: "What is mine through Thy gift, let it be Thine through my gift!" Then follows the mystical expression: "Inflame in me my Christ!" Thus she lived wholly in and by the Catholic truth that all meritorius works depend on the exercise of free will, but are essentially special gifts of God; that, therefore, according to the Council of Trent (Sess. VI. 16.) it must be far from every Christian to trust in or glorify himself instead of the Lord, Whose bounty towards all is so great, that it is His will that His gifts be esteemed as the merit of man. To this is added, that according to Holy Scripture, "we all offend in many things," and show not only many defects in our good works, but also many faults in our life, which are to be judged not by a human, but by the divine standard. These

humble sentiments animated Mother Frances, and for this reason she deemed it her duty to resign her office and to devote the last years of her life to retirement and severe penance. All saintly souls agree with Hugh of Grenoble, who says, explaining the rule of St. Benedict: "The good I have is not all good, and is not mine: the evil I do is all evil, and wholly mine."

3. Accounting herself nothing, she declined all honors, sincerely deeming herself unworthy of them. The rule of action which she reduced to practice is contained in the warning she once gave to a Sister: "Sister, do not permit yourself to be honored!" In her memorandum-book occurs the following passage: "Do nothing for the sake of being seen or esteemed by men: do all because God wills it, and do it purely for God. Say at least five times a day: 'Jesus, for love of Thee!'" Whosoever loves God more than self, is zealous only for His glory, Who, by adoption, gives Him participation in it.

In her whole deportment, Mother Frances was plain and simple and so far removed from pretence and display of her own excellence, that it was obvious that she sought neither her own advancement, nor the recognition of others. It was her special joy to do good unknown and unacknowledged; praise and flattery pained her. This was observable on the occasion of her patronal feast. Not succeeding in suppressing its celebration, she forbade, by a special circular, reference in poetry or song to her own person. The feast was to be dedicated to God, to Whom all honor belongs, to the Blessed Virgin, and to St. Francis. She would

severely reprimand the Sisters if they did not scrupulously confine themselves, in accordance with this precept, to the celebration of these; allusion to her own merits caused her sorrow instead of joy.

4. Circumstances permitting, she would conceal her high position. Sometimes, when walking through the streets, she would insist that her companion take the place to her right, so that she herself might be taken for a simple Sister. Her exchanging the scapular with the red cross for the plain one of a younger Sister was mentioned before.

She attained to a happy state of spiritual liberty, so that praise and censure of others were indifferent to her and did not influence her actions. When Christian prudence permitted, she would even prefer to appear ridiculous, and would sometimes contrive to place herself and her companion in a rather awkward position. Thus she once walked along the Rhine carrying an open umbrella, though the weather was very fine. She observed to her companion: "The world esteems us for fools anyhow; let them therefore laugh at us."

5. Unalterably fixed as she was in her principles, when these were not in question, she was docile to the judgment and will of others. The Sisters relate many little instances of her consulting the most simple Sisters, and even novices, in things that had reference to her alone. When she visited a convent of some other Order, she would improve the opportunity to exercise herself in humility and obedience by asking permission like a novice for even the least of her movements, to the great edifica-

tion and admiration of the Sisters. "A person truly humble will endeavor rather to do the will of another, than his own." (Imit. of Chirst, B. III. 23.)

6. From the resolutions written by her during the annual retreats may be gathered, how she labored to make her soul, by interior mortification, a pure temple of God. In May, 1859, she wrote that she had received permission to make the vow, for one year, *a*) Never to entertain voluntarily an unnecessary thought of creatures; *b*) to have no attachment to them in her heart, however saintly they might appear. — Among other resolutions of that year we mention the following: "I will not depart from what has been prescribed to me in Thy service, neither from love for what pleases me, nor from fear of that which is abhorrent to me. Therefore I will 1) keep within bounds my too great activity; 2) walk in the presence of God in order to attain the desired union with Him." In March, 1862, she wrote: "I will not permit aversions or preferences in myself. At the least indication of such sentiments I will place my hand on my heart, and say the prayers to the Blessed Virgin: 'My Queen, my Mother,' etc. Thereby I shall always remain in recollection and preserve interior peace."

With interior mortification, the saints joined that of an austere and penitential life — many of them, if not the most, in so high a degree as to go beyond the usual, and to human judgment advisable measure. Our effeminate, luxurious time, a stranger to the doctrine of the cross, turns away from this, as it calls it, useless self-torment in repugnance and dread. Perhaps these sensitive

souls pity St. Paul, who instead of enjoying life, says: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection." (I Cor. IX. 27.)

As to extraordinary works of penance, all we know of Mother Frances is that she would impose on herself, at least in earlier years, many and severe austerities besides those of community life. For many years she mixed ox-gall with her meals on Fridays. Altogether, her daily life, after she left her home, was a continual round of penance, self-denials and trials.

7. When not severely ill, or prevented absolutely, she took part from morning till night in all the exercises and labors of the community. After returning late at night from a journey, she would rise next morning at half-past four, and would rarely follow the advice of the Sisters to rest a little longer. She strictly observed the numerous fasts and abstinences, taking incredibly little nourishment. Even in later years, when quite exhausted by sicknesses and labors, she fasted, and took but half of the small slice of bread allowed in the morning.

One of the Sisters relates that during the last years of Mother Frances, she one day found her so exhausted by fasting, that she could scarcely speak. To the suggestion to have some refreshment brought from the kitchen, she replied: "No, dear Sister; I just took two sealing wafers, and as it is now eleven o'clock, I can probably wait till noon without breaking the fast." Even on other days besides fast-days she would never take nourishment except at the fixed time. At dinner, she often took but a

little soup and vegetables, as a Sister testifies who attended to the table for years. The Sister adds: "Once, when she was very weak and suffering, I asked her for permission to add an egg to her soup in the evening. She refused, and I wept saying: 'But you are so very weak.' She rejoined: 'I know your good heart; but if you do not wish me to refuse the soup, give me the same as the Sisters have.'" On another occasion she confessed that her weak state made some exceptions necessary; "but", she added, "mine is a prominent position, and I must give a good example, even if I should die a few years earlier." Very rarely, and only when her weak condition demanded it, she would allow herself a little refreshment, which usually consisted in a piece of apple, or a glass of water mixed with a few drops of wine. In the refectory she would never permit any exception to be made in her favor in the dishes, or in the quality of the victuals. Sometimes the Sisters would, from sympathy, try to induce her to be more careful of her health, but, as one relates at length, a reprimand was the answer, and the sole effect was still greater self-denial on the part of the venerable Mother. She was very watchful in this respect, and if she suspected that exceptions were made in her favor, she would either take nothing, or distribute everything amongst the others, in order, as she remarked, to make reparation for the offence against the rule by this act of mortification.

8. As we have already observed, the fare of the Sisters was scanty and poor, the fasts were strict and frequent, and the work exhausting. Well-

meaning priests censured this, as they regarded it, too great severity. Mother Frances mitigated some of the austerities, especially after the archiepiscopal visitation in 1869. For her personally, the mitigations scarcely made any difference. Her love of poverty and penance, and her living faith inspired her with thoughts which to some will appear strange. "God can give as much nourishing power to a piece of bread as is contained in a piece of meat," she once observed. On another occasion she reminded a Sister: "To sustain life there is not need of so very much; if there is only the will, a person can do very much. Dear Sister, on fast days, when you take your morsel of bread and dip it into your cup, do as I do: think you dip it into the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and you shall see what power and strength you will derive from it. Often you will not need the whole of your morsel."

9. Even while travelling in the interests of the Congregation, she did not omit the usual fasts. As a consequence, her meals sometimes consisted of a slice of bread with butter, a little fruit and a cup of tea, thereby showing that she lived poorly amongst the poor, and really was poor. A Sister who once accompanied her on a journey, wrote: "During her journeys her abstinence from food and drink was really marvellous, and her attendants had to be very strong to imitate her." This remark is fully borne out by the description of one of her journeys, and shows also the charity with which she was intent on making the ordeal easier for her attendant. On the occasion referred to she had

resolved to remain fasting till ten o'clock, at which time she was to arrive at Cologne, where she intended to receive Communion at a late Mass. "I am not fatigued," she remarked to the Sister, "but I fear it will be too difficult to you." She insisted that the Sister should take some refreshment before starting, but the latter was resolved to follow the venerable Mother's example; "for," she says, "I observed that by this self-denial and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary she intended to implore a special blessing on the Congregation. The long ride during the excessive heat was very trying. The venerable Mother looked so suffering and exhausted that I feared she would not stand it. Nevertheless, we both succeeded in receiving holy Communion at half-past ten."

10. Mother Frances was wont to undergo these fatigues, as a Sister observes, "with great cheerfulness, because she would offer them up for the success of the Congregation." Another Sister writes: "She said: 'As in the supernatural order all salvation comes to us through the sufferings and cross of Christ, thus we can also participate in His cross only by suffering, and we can become fit instruments in the hand of God for the salvation of souls only by union with Him. Every work for the honor of God must share in the cross of Christ, if it is to be beneficial and fruitful.'"

Influenced by this sentiment, and by her great love of poverty, she would not, despite her poor health and the persuasions of the Sisters, use a conveyance in unfavorable weather and on bad roads to arrive at a distant railway station. It

often pained the Sisters that she could not be dissuaded from going on foot in her weak state of health. Once, when about to leave Coblenz, the weather being very stormy and she ill, she finally, after long resistance, consented to use a carriage; but during the ride she burst into tears, and remarked that she suffered more by the spiritual depression caused by this exception to her custom, than by the most fatiguing walk. The attendant Sister adds: "Henceforth we never again compelled her to ride."

11. By natural temperament she was very sensitive to heat and cold, and much affected by changes of the weather. She accepted these involuntary self-denials quite differently from other people, viz. in part as a penance imposed on us by God for our faults, and in part as graces. "For," she remarked, "these painful external impressions are but a challenge to make use of the interior graces that are offered to us, in order that by temporal suffering which we accept from the hand of God, everlasting crowns may be won by us."

12. It is, usually, quite foreign to man to undergo voluntary mortification; would that we at least made use of such as are involuntary according to the will of God. Therefore the lesson which Mother Frances gave to an invalid Sister deserves special mention. "Heat and cold," she remarked, "wind and rain exert a great influence on you and me, and are for us the best mortifications. They are special graces from above. By their means we can perform great and continual works of penance which are the more meritorious because they are

performed secretly, and nobody has even the least suspicion of them."

13. With these mortifications, sent by God Himself, she also numbered the sacrifices and duties imposed by her office. Among her resolutions of the retreat of 1873 is the following: "To suffer humiliation by those who do not yet belong entirely to Christ, thereby to gain them for Christ, in honor of His Incarnation. Let the cross be the sign of dominion, humiliation the crown, and abnegation the royal mantle."

Labor and suffering are the pilgrim's portion since paradise was lost. But according to God's disposal they are not alone punishments, but also incentives to and supports of virtue and merit for eternity. If they are accepted from the hand of God in a loving spirit, they are transformed even here below into instruments of sanctification and peace, and hereafter into resplendent jewels of an everlasting crown.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mother Frances as Foundress and Member of her Congregation.

1. As there are purely personal duties and duties of one's state of life, thus there are also virtues peculiar to each one's vocation, in the practice of which the character and moral worth of man are best cultivated and displayed. From early childhood Mother Frances felt called to the religious state; but she had not the remotest idea, nor did she in the least aspire to found a new congregation, to infuse her own spirit into others, and thus, as

it were, to multiply herself. The happiness so ardently desired by her, to live in obedience and retirement, was not accorded her. When, during the first years of her religious life, she was induced to yield to this desire, she learned by bitter experience that even the seemingly most holy desires must be sacrificed to the will of God. She remained burdened with the responsible office imposed upon her by the founding and direction of her Congregation, during her whole life. In the following chapters we shall have to regard her not simply as a religious, but as Foundress and Superioress General. That she was a model of punctuality in the observance of the rules and vows, we have already seen.

2. The founding of the Congregation through her was the will of God, and therefore the real task of her life, her greatest and most beneficial work, and withal the one most fruitful of afflictions. St. Francis de Sales, in his *Theotime*, aptly observes that amongst the acts and practices of charity that sentiment stands high above all others, by which the soul not only dedicates to the service of God and of fellow-man all that it has, together with all its faculties, but, as it were, multiplies itself, communicating to others, in a measure, the spirit it received from God, and forming associates in that spirit. This communication of activity is a kind of spiritual maternity.

The Congregation in whose foundation God used her as His instrument outlived her, and over eleven hundred Sisters in Europe and America continue the ministrations of charity begun by their spiritual

Mother at an early period in Aix la Chapelle. Prominent members of the secular and regular clergy often remarked that Mother Frances well understood how to impart to her daughters, in a relative degree, the spirit which God had infused into her, so that a certain accord of sentiment and demeanor is observable in the Congregation, despite the dissimilarity of individual character and acquisitions. The reason of this peculiarity certainly was not a more strict external drill or discipline, for in many religious communities more seems to be required in this respect than in ours; nor has it its source in the Constitutions, for they by no means model everything on one pattern. It is rather to be found in the impression left by the venerable Mother's powerful, gifted personality on the spirit and mind of her daughters. They were involuntarily drawn by her noble example, impressed with her forcible instructions and captivated by her charity and affability, so that they appeared transformed, often in a very short time. We must, however, add in this respect, that a higher power multiplied, as it were, the treasures of grace in her heart, and in a measure permitted the souls of those of her children that were capable of it to participate in them. The interior of souls is accessible to God alone, and only the light and warmth of the Divine Sun can re-form the innermost and highest qualities of the mind and infuse into it a new spirit. Moreover, the communion of saints in the holy Church of God is so effective, that their prayers and merits usually extend to a great number of other souls. We witness this in all the great monastic founders,

They were not only the recipients, or agents, of a great spirit, but as it were also the conduits through which God transmitted His gifts to others, and vivified a whole community in the new spirit. The Holy Ghost, abiding in the Church, continually brings forth new fruits, using man as His free agent to accomplish His designs.

4. These remarks explain, on the one hand, the secret of the achievements of Mother Frances, and on the other they determine the position which she occupied relative to the Congregation. At the same time, they are the key to an intelligent estimation of her mode of action and her deportment, which otherwise might sometimes appear strange.

Often she declared that she did not consider herself as the foundress of the Congregation. It was rather God's work, Who began it through her, without her having the intention or plan, or even the will of accomplishing it. God also it was, she would sometimes say, Who had hitherto directed the Congregation. He had operated in it quite contrary to human expectations; He had often removed the very pillars of the Congregation and at the very time when they seemed indispensable. Then He would manifestly come to her aid, and new supports would be raised up. She considered herself as an indifferent instrument in the hand of God, taking upon herself all the blame for the deficiencies of her institute.

This view of her relation to God and the Congregation also determined her mode of action towards the latter. From it sprang above all her continual sense of responsibility, and the firmness with which

she resisted influences that were contrary to the spirit of the divine plantation; and lastly, the higher charity, in virtue of which she devoted all her energies to the welfare of the Congregation.

5. As a result, we find in these sentiments an explanation of her seemingly inordinate desire of being relieved from her office, which induced her to make, when opportunity offered, every effort to attain her object. The main reason of this was the sense of great responsibility which God had imposed on her by placing His work, according to her view in incompetent hands. The wider the Congregation spread, the more did this sense increase, and only the will of God, clearly indicated to her by obedience, counterbalanced it. Her personal influence necessarily decreased in proportion as the Sisters increased in number and were scattered in various houses as far distant as America. Excellent as the spirit of her institute was, human frailty is too great not to be noticeable in a numerous congregation with individual faults and transgressions. Now, Mother Frances, as was related before, was in the habit of ascribing the frailties of her subjects to her own negligence, and even to atone for them by imposing penances on herself. Under date of February 21st, 1863, we find the following note in her memorandum-book: "With the grace of God I will strive to suppress the unregulated desire for human aid in directing the Congregation and my own interior. With still greater confidence than with regard to temporal needs I will trust in this respect to the fatherly Heart of God, permitting all my desires to be absorbed by the heart of Jesus.

However, when human intervention and help seems necessary, I will take refuge with the representative of God, like a good child with its parent." The same sentiment occurs in a notice written the year before, and is supplemented by the addition: "Of course I will try, with the help of God, not to be wanting in my own co-operation."

6. From this conviction, that she was defending a work of God, proceeded her firmness when there was question of asserting the principles peculiar to the Congregation, especially in everything relating to holy poverty. It is not strange that this firmness was sometimes taken for obstinacy. With her, resistance was simply a conscientious duty; she could not and would not abandon what she recognized beyond doubt as the work and will of God; she was firmly convinced that the Lord would consummate what His grace had begun, if His work were only not betrayed through human respect. Later, also, when she suffered bitterly from contradiction concerning the houses in America, where influential persons demanded certain changes, she remained firm, and wrote to one of the Superioresses there: "Let us remain firm, and not be affected by storms or false zeal. Our Congregation is the work of God, not of man."

7. As a consequence, she was convinced that in directing the Congregation she must be entirely dependent on the will of God, doing with all her power everything to discern it by suitable means, and then executing it. Thus she observed in one of her instructions to the Sisters: "You must practise obedience by doing the will of God: I must

do the same. For God is the Lord of our Congregation. But for you it is easy; the will of God is manifested to you without exertion on your part by the word of your Superioress. My duty is, first to learn the will of God; and this is often very difficult, and necessitates greater endeavor and earnest prayer." As a matter of fact, when the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, and her legitimate Superiors did not plainly show her the way, Mother Frances always was at great pains to discern the will of God, and not only in matters of importance, as we have already shown, but even in the little occurrences of daily life. She never would order a removal, impose an office, or receive a postulant, without first consulting the Supreme Lord of the Congregation, and, according to circumstances, receiving moral certitude of the divine will by means of novenas or continued prayers, and also by consulting others. Of course this is not to be understood as if she had, in every case, an unmistakable and express divine revelation: to expect this would have been presumption. But she did expect such an illumination, that according to human reasoning, she could form a true and rational judgment as to what was the will of God. Such a proceeding does not exclude the possibility of making mistakes in individual cases.

8. Because Mother Frances considered the Congregation as belonging to God, she felt a love for it that possessed a higher character than nature can give, a love which was of divine origin. It is human to love one's own creation, and the greater a person's self-love is, the more he loves and esteems his own

achievements. Mother Frances, as we have seen, esteemed her works as nothing, and therefore was far from overestimating her Congregation. On the other hand, her praise of other communities was sincere. As to her own Congregation, she had always before her eyes its human side, with all the faults and infirmities common to human undertakings. Therefore she set so much the higher value on the power of God and the plentitude of His mercies, which she had experienced during the development of the Congregation, and her God-loving soul could not but love this work of God, and praise Him with grateful heart for all He had wrought through it. Not only her external, but also her interior life was intimately bound up with the development, joys and trials of the Congregation, and was, as it were, one with it. The Congregation was in her heart, and her heart was in the Congregation. St. Paul expresses his relation to the members of the Church in the words: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" (II. Cor. XI. 29.) His great heart felt most sensibly all the infirmities, the tepidity and perverseness of the members of the body of Christ, but at the same time, all the progress and all the blessings, which God imparted to His "dearly beloved brethren," his "joy and his crown." (Philip. IV. 1.) The Church lived in his heart, and his heart in the Church. The relations of Mother Frances to her daughters were similar, and we may compare her heart with the heart of the Apostle. Trials and joys, reverses and success of individuals as well as of the community were affairs

of the heart with her. An instance which convinced her that the spirit of God dwelt in many of her daughters once filled her with rejoicing and gratitude. It is well known that the plague of yellow fever is more dangerous for people not acclimated than even the dreaded cholera; a protracted term of nursing its victims in hospitals is almost always the nurse's death warrant. Now, when several Sisters were asked for to serve in a hospital of this kind in Memphis, on the Mississippi, all the Sisters of that house voluntarily offered their services and implored, on their knees and with tears, each one for herself, the privilege to die for her brethren and sisters.

9. The exalted idea which Mother Frances had of the religious state and its duties is intimately connected with what we have hitherto observed of her. Therefore she was intent on impressing the Sisters with the sentiment that life in religion must be exclusively a service of God. She sought with with all her might to attain this high ideal herself. Thus she writes during the retreat of 1873: "My whole life, with its cares, sacrifices and afflictions shall be a continual external and internal homage to God, day and night, by fulfilling all my duties from morning till evening, aye, throughout the night. I will offer myself and the whole Congregation anew as a holocaust to my Redeemer. My God, I consecrate myself totally, entirely to Thee. I will ask pardon for my own sins, and for the sins of the whole Congregation: My Jesus, mercy! I will fervently thank God for all the benefits He confers on me and on us all: *Deo gratias! Deo gratias!*

I will pray most fervently for my own sanctification and for that of all the Sisters: Lord, incline unto my aid; Lord, make haste to help me! Whatever I do, suffer, miss, I will offer to the Lord as a sacrifice of homage."

If this idea were carried out, every convent would be a little kingdom of the genuine love of God and man. Christ, dwelling for love of us in the tabernacle, ought to be the King and the Lord of this kingdom; His will alone ruling, the portals should be closed to all self-will. Beginning with the Superioress, each inmate should attend to her office, high or low, from dawn to dusk, in dutiful promptness for God's sake. The religious, as a servant called to minister to the Great King, should do nothing for the sake of men, all for Christ's sake, happy to be permitted the least ministrations.—One day, when an invalid Sister complained that she could do but little work for the Order, Mother Frances consoled her, saying: "At the court of the Great King everything, even the least, done in His service is great."

The dignity of the religious state, according to her conception, even transcended by far this exalted ministry. The religious ought not only devote and consecrate her life and her service, but also her heart and her own personality to her Heavenly Spouse. According to the doctrine and language of the Church, by the three vows she becomes, in an exalted, spiritual sense, the spouse of her crucified King. For this reason she must renounce earthly enjoyments and elect here below the cross with Christ, in order to have part in His crown hereafter.

On days of profession, Mother Frances would inculcate this sentiment in various ways. Once she remarked: "By pronouncing the vows we ought to become like unto the Crucified. We are thereby nailed to the cross. Henceforth our hands may not be employed according to our own will; our feet may not go where we wish, our heart may not desire, nor love, except what God wills and loves." And continuing, she dwelt at length on the duty of being grateful to the Giver of all good things with heart and lips and in deed because that He, the Creator of heaven and earth, the King of kings, has graciously deigned to accept for His spouse so unworthy a creature. In 1870, she wrote to a Sister: "After you have offered up to the Lord all you possessed, dear Sister, you must strive so much the more earnestly to consecrate to Him entirely all that you *are*. We must become, in the full sense of the term, holocausts to the Lord."—"To renounce all except God, to retain nothing for ourselves, and to abandon ourselves entirely to God" — this was the sublime lesson she gave to a Sister who had expressed a wish to show herself very grateful to God for this grace.

10. The more exalted a dignity is in the service of God, the greater is the obligation, and the more exacting is the service to be offered to the Great King. Therefore Mother Frances required great things of herself, and not a little of the Sisters, especially of those more favored by God. Of these she required a resolute will to draw nearer and nearer to the crucified Redeemer by self-renunciation and bearing of the cross. Regarding this she

wrote confidentially to a Sister, a short time before her death, January 4th, 1875: "I recognized from the beginning that our Sisters must become very brave in their arduous ministry, and I always felt impelled to treat them vigorously." She then adds: "The Lord treats me in the same manner. I tell you this confidentially, but it appears in part even outwardly. God demands of me one sacrifice after the other, and gives me bitter pills to swallow every day. In return, I humbly kiss His hand in gratitude. Let us, therefore, dear Sister, follow Our Divine Saviour, and learn to suffer, bear and love much here below, that hereafter we may be the nearer to Him. Pray particuarly for me, as I do for you."

11. To serve Christ in love, and to bear His cross with courage—this was the real import of all the exhortations, instructions and lessons by which Mother Frances sought to form the Sisters for their vocation. Numerous examples show how she inculcated this sentiment in various ways. Once, when information was received that the convent of another community had been destroyed by fire, some of the Sisters expressed their regret at the misfortune. Mother Frances observed that the accident was only an external one, at which she could not feel so very grieved. And with ardent zeal she added: "I would rather see the whole house tumble about our heads, than that one Sister should offend God by a voluntary venial sin." When a Sister complained of her sufferings, she would listen with displeasure, because the Sister ought to be ready to become a martyr. The remark of the Ven. J. B. Vianney, curé d' Ars, was a favorite

saying with her: "Saints do not complain." She would sometimes add: "Do not complain, but sustain!" Once, when a severely tried Sister sought consolation with her, she asked: "How long is it since you have made your profession?" The Sister replied: "Over five years." — "Well, then," rejoined the venerable Mother, "you ought to have more love for the cross; you ought to remain quietly and even joyfully on it as long as it pleases God." When another Sister, greatly favored by God, complained to her of severe interior trials, she seemed not to pay much attention, so that the Sister made bold to say that she had no compassion for her. She answered: "How? When one has received so many favors and graces from earliest youth as you have, together with strong will power, she must not claim sympathy. You should rejoice that God Himself deigns to become your glorious novice-master, repairing what your mistress omitted through human frailty, ignorance or want of attention." When the same Sister, in consequence of many interior and external difficulties, seemed to relax in zeal and fervor, Mother Frances severely reprehended her, saying amongst other things: "I would not have expected this of you. The lukewarmness exhibited by you now is insufferable to me. Go before the Blessed Sacrament, where you formerly found so much courage and strength, to regain consolation, resignation and help." To another, who querulously related her trials, she simply replied: "You desired it that way." These words were sufficient to restore peace to the heart of the really virtuous Sister.

12. From these examples may be gathered how

grieved she was if a Sister relaxed from her first fervor; for she desired them all to live for God alone, yea, even to become saints. "Alas," she once exclaimed in tears, and in tones of greatest agitation, "our Congregation has as yet no saints! Graces and opportunities are not wanting."

To another Sister she expressed a sentiment which deserves the more attention, because the truth it expresses is realized by so very few. "How deplorable," she said, "that God is known and loved by so few! What coldness and indifference most men show towards their God and Redeemer! And what is most deplorable, this spirit of apathy also finds its way into religious houses, and into souls consecrated to God, where holy zeal in God's service should increase from day to day."

13. Her memorandum-book informs us that she dreaded this tepidity most for herself. After an humble self-accusation, she writes on the 21st of February, 1863: "I deserve punishment, O Lord, punishment. Behold me ready for any castigation! One thing alone I implore of Thee, O Lord, *Rabboni*, do not, oh do not deprive me of Thy love! Remain with me together with Thy grace, and I will hold fast to Thee in love and fidelity. Do not bless me and then depart from me, O Lord! Thy presence with me, Thy abiding in my heart is bliss, is salvation, is blessing to me. O Lord, what I promised to Thee, what my tears have told Thee during the Way of the Cross — assist me to fulfil it! I love Thee, O Lord! Help me to love Thee! O my Divine Redeemer, I declare myself ready for every humiliation, for every pain and difficulty. Do but grant me Thy grace, and do not deprive me of Thy love!"

CHAPTER IX

Mother Frances in her Intercourse with the Sisters.

1. The exalted, truly Catholic principles regarding religious life, with which Mother Frances sought to imbue her Sisters, were not simply lessons culled from books, and vapid theories drawn from memory, but they were, so to say, incorporated in and with her life and being. Thus they were realities, visible to the eyes of her daughters; they had become spirit and life; they took possession of their hearts, inasmuch as the latter were accessible to the grace of God. The word of a teacher may suffice to impart knowledge to a pupil; but to educate in a Christian manner; above all, to educate to Christian perfection — this needs other and higher helps. St. Bernard mentions three aids to it, saying: "There remain these three: word, example and prayer; the greater of these is prayer." We can truly say of Mother Frances, that from 1845 to 1876 she used these means with great success to imbue her Congregation with the spirit which God has infused into her, and firmly to establish it. We have remarked repeatedly, that in directing the Sisters she expected success of God alone, and implored it of Him in fervent prayer. To her instructions we shall refer later: let us now view her powerful example.

2. We have already been informed that as Superioress General she was foremost in all religious exercises, and in self-denial; that, although engaged in vast affairs and well nigh overwhelmed with cares, she took part in all the daily exercises and duties of the Sisters, even the most lowly, and that

she always selected the most menial offices for herself. Such an example of a Superior is more effective under any circumstances, than the most impressive exhortations; but with her the influence of example was enhanced by the charm of her whole individuality. Of themselves, her rare qualities of mind and character exerted a continual influence on her subjects, but still greater was the effect of her large-hearted charity. The superiority of her mind gave her a great ascendency over all around her, and this authority was a mighty bond of union for the Congregation; yet, the charity of her generous heart was undoubtedly more effective in drawing the hearts of all to her. True, her principles were firm and strict, she insisted on achievements far from easy, she was independent and energetic; but all these characteristics were far surpassed by her truly maternal affection for each Sister. Her motherly heart could not be false to itself even when she felt constrained to administer a rebuke. This charity gained love in return, and explains the secret of her wholesome and far reaching influence on the entire Congregation. Other virtues rather set up an external standard; but the practice of unselfish charity possesses inherent force to captivate heart and soul.

3. The Sisters, in their reminiscences, are full of praise of her great charity. She practised it in such a manner towards all and each, that none could doubt but she had found in her a second mother always loving, always careful of the true welfare of her children. Her solicitude for their temporal and spiritual well-being prompted her not

only to supply their wants, but also to provide for them suitable conveniences and comforts.

Above all, sick Sisters were the objects of her charitable ministrations. Intent on their temporal necessities, she was still more solicitous that their souls should draw spiritual profit from their illness. If Sisters in a branch house were seriously ill, she would visit them, if possible. She possessed a rare faculty of consoling and encouraging the Sisters in their temptations and interior trials. A few words, or as a Sister put it, "a loving glance from Mother," was usually sufficient to infuse peace and courage. As we shall see later, she sometimes, in a surprising manner, assisted Sisters that kept their trials to themselves. She remained true till death to her custom of assisting dying Sisters at their last moments. Even if herself unwell and in need of rest, she would not omit this act of charity so consoling to the Sisters.

4. In her treatment of the Sisters her maternal charity was so conspicuous, despite her lofty principles and her aversion to all effeminacy, that her intercourse had nothing austere, and the Sisters felt, admired and praised above all things her affection. At the proper time she could indeed give sharp reprimands, but at the close of them a token of love would follow. Sometimes she would give the corrected Sister a *bonbon*, adding a few affectionate words. Even when she was severe the Sisters could not doubt that her zeal proceeded from her desire of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and that she sympathised with and shared the sorrow of her daughters.

5. This charity not only mitigated the austerity of her principles, but dominated, to a certain degree, her deportment, so that she could become weak with the weak, as St. Paul (I Cor. IX. 22.) says of himself. From year to year her mildness and condescension to the infirmities of human nature increased. She felt and feared the weakness of her own heart, and apprehended that too great sympathy with the trials of others might induce her to set aside the will of God as her rule of conduct. When she recognized that an arrangement, for instance, the removal of a Sister, was to be made from higher motives, and was at the same time convinced that others would be painfully affected, and would importune her to recall her order, she would seek to bring the matter to an issue before she listened to or read such petitions, fearing lest, through sympathy, she might weaken. And how pained she would feel if she could not relieve Sisters burdened with overwork, or invalids sinking under the weight of duty! For example, the Superioress of the convicts' reformatory at Aix la Chapelle being ill and oppressed by other difficulties, the venerable Mother's eyes filled with tears. When the Sister inquired why she wept, she replied: "I weep, because I cannot help you." A short time before her death, June 12th, 1876, she wrote to a grievously tempted and almost discouraged Sister: "If you cannot continue where you are, tell your Superioress to send you to the mother-house; for I cannot permit you to pine away physically and morally. But I would remind you of your God and Redeemer, who not only fatigued Himself

for you, but suffered most excruciating pains for you in the superabundance of His love. On your part, therefore, you must, even if it causes you great difficulty and severe trials, persevere firmly and faithfully, returning love for love. Implore the Lord for this grace with renewed fervor, and offer yourself up with all your heart to the will of God. I hope you will be victorious. Write to me very soon whether you have abandoned yourself generously to the Crucified. In the love of the thorn-crowned Sacred Heart of Jesus I salute and bless you, dear Sister."

6. The instruction which she gave to a Superioress in a letter written two years before her death, she practised herself. She exhorts her to "have some regard for human frailty, to contemplate Our Divine Saviour, and to examine herself whether her sentiments are similar to His, especially regarding mildness towards others and severity towards self. Necessary corrections are permissible, but must be given quietly, affably, and at the proper time."

Her maternal solicitude for her daughters is apparent also from a letter written on the 2d of October, 1876, to the Superioress of a branch house. "Presumably you had the happiness of being the first to greet our dear American Sisters. I know that you will do whatever is in your power to make the good Sisters comfortable. You are indeed to be envied for having the first opportunity of showing them charity. Tell them that I am anxious to see them, but let them not come before they are somewhat rested."

7. Love begets love, and thus is explained why

the Sisters received into the Order by Mother Frances not only had the greatest veneration for her on account of her virtues, but were attached to her in singular confidence and love. Each one was convinced that "Mother" was entirely disinterested and unselfish, desiring only the welfare of the Congregation, and that she took no account of her own inclinations and preferences when the comfort of others was in question. A Sister writes: "One always felt oneself understood, known, loved and esteemed by Mother. It seemed as if each one was the only one to be taken care of. One could tell her everything, and could obey her directions in the often proved conviction that she penetrated her confidant's conscience. In her daily intercouse with the Sisters she was equally amiable and circumspect, and thereby gained the hearts of all. One word from her was sufficient to incite us to every sacrifice; it was happiness for us to do what she desired. Our whole life was, as it were, imbued with love for her, so that we scarcely any longer felt the difficulties of obedience."

8. Esteem and love for the person taking God's place and commanding in His name may make obedience easier and more pleasant, but usually does not render it more meritorious. On the contrary, its merit suffers if human affection takes the place of supernatural motives. For what proceeds from affection for a certain person, is of little value before God and of no merit for eternity. True Christian obedience submits not on account of the qualities of the person commanding, but on account of God's supreme authority, and therefore considers

in the command not the voice of man, but of God. "He that heareth you, heareth me." (Luke X. 16.) Moreover, if our obedience is influenced by the talent of or love for the person in authority, it becomes the more difficult when this motive fails, that is, when the person in authority is a stranger to or not in sympathy with the one obeying, so that the sacrifice of obedience is the result of compulsion or obligation alone.

9. Obedience must be practised in all phases and circumstances of life. But according to Holy Scripture Christians are not to practise obedience from purely human motives, but man is to be obeyed in faith for God's sake. Man is not to be the slave of man, but must offer the sacrifice of his will to the Great King as a free child of God, being obedient, "subject to every human creature for God's sake." (I Pet. II. 23.) And St. Paul exhorts us: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men." (Ephes. VI. 5–7.)

CHAPTER X.

Her Principles and Method in Directing the Congregation.

1. It may not be without profit to religious, if we give a condensed account of the method she observed in directing the Congregation, and show how she educated its members for their vocation.

Convinced on the one hand of the truth that the welfare of a religious community depends on the admission of such persons only as have a divine vocation, and on the other, that those admitted must be educated in the right spirit, whilst those unfit must be dismissed betimes, she nevertheless found that it is very often not an easy task to form a correct judgment whether a person is called to the religious state at all, and to a certain Order in particular. External attainments, natural gifts, noble descent or wealth do not prove a vocation. Therefore Superiors that permit themselves to be influenced by such considerations in the admission of candidates, expose themselves to the danger of causing great damage to the Order, and to the candidates as well.

In this respect, Mother Frances was truly a model. Despising wealth as she did, it was a matter of course that she had no regard for what the postulants had, and cared only for what they were, that is, whether they craved admission in order to follow their crucified Redeemer and to attain eternal life.

2. Great as her joy was, when she was permitted to lead to St. Francis those that had a true vocation, yet she did not omit to remind the postulants most sincerely of the difficulties and duties of the religious state. Many Sisters tell us that she dwelt most earnestly on the fact, that "they had to come in the intention of choosing for themselves the cross and to have so much of a spouse's love for Our Saviour as to be willing to walk in His bloody footsteps and to follow Him contemplating His cross,

in a poor and despised life." One Sister's account of her reception by Mother Frances when asking admission of her in 1874, is as follows: "She asked me: 'Why do you intend to join just this Order, where the mode of life is so severe? Do you know what obligations it will impose upon you? We pronounce the vow of following Our Saviour in poverty, of living in perpetual chastity, and of submitting our will to obedience. It is better withal not to make a vow, than to make one and not keep it. (Eccl. V. 4.) Our life is in direct opposition to the world: if it is to be in accord with its object, it must be a life of sacrifice. Consider seriously that a follower of a crucified God can expect and claim nothing but humiliations, contempt and contradictions. You must therefore not be surprised at finding in religious life much that is difficult and repulsive to nature. Nevertheless, our life is a happy one; to the eye of faith it is similar to that which once was led in the holy house of Nazareth.'" The Sister adds that the manner and words of the venerable Mother so impressed her, that she could scarcely await the time of admission so as to be permitted to call the servant of God "Mother," and that this ardent desire greatly assisted her in overcoming her natural grief at the departure from her family.

3. We continue to quote from the account of this Sister: "Five months later I had the privilege of being admitted among the children of our venerable Mother. She addressed me: 'Receive my blessing on entering this holy state. May you become, with the assistance of God, a good member

of our Order. But you must be prepared for sufferings and trials. Remember that you are not joining a choir of angels. Always keep the end in view for which you have left the world and entered the Order, namely, to work for the attainment of perfection. Above all, have courage! God will assist you.' After I had been in the mother-house ten days, she said to me: 'The mother-house is not to be your abode, for I intend to send you to a branch house. Be of good cheer! With the grace of God I have succeeded in having permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament in all our houses, even the smallest. What more can you desire, my child? Moreover, I tell you that the place to which I am about to send you, is a favored one. There the Mother of Sorrows is the ever helpful refuge of those that have recourse to her. Go then, my blessing follows you.' On the 13th of October, 1875, Mother Frances visited our branch house for the first time since my arrival, and I had the happiness of listening to her words of consolation and encouragement. 'Why lose courage,' she remarked, 'when trials and difficulties fall to our lot, when God grants us the favor of admitting us early to His school of the cross? What are all our little crosses in comparison with the sufferings of the saints? Verily, there is no humility in complaints about adversities. Should we not rather rejoice thereat? Be calm, then, and persevere! What you have to bear is not too much. God does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength. Should there be times when you cannot perform your daily exercises of piety, listen to the divine inspirations, and let

your work be your prayer. Offer up your trials cheerfully to God. In the evening you may say: Lord, I did what I could; accept it for Thy honor and glory! Fulfil daily the obligations imposed by the rule; for as we accustom ourselves when young postulants, thus we continue later.' "

4. We add a few more instances in confirmation of the above. A postulant had informed Mother Frances that her parents would not give her a dowry. She answered: "I told you before and inform you again, that I shall receive you. Bring along whatever articles of dress you may; for the rest, I do not care for what you bring, but for your vocation." The same reply was given to another girl who was in the same predicament, and she too was received. When her parents a few years later were convinced of her happiness in the Order, they became reconciled to her choice of the religious state. When the Sister informed Mother Frances of this change, she strictly forbade her to mention a word to her parents concerning her dowry.

On the other hand, she would not suffer a postulant to think that the Congregation was under obligations to her for her dowry or for her personal services, instead of acknowledging that she was the one who owed humble gratitude to the Congregation. A candidate, to whom admission had already been promised without reference to her means, informed her casually that she would bring a dowry of some thousand thalers to the Congregation. Mother Frances immediately revoked her promise of admission. Many of our readers may be as surprised at this refusal as the candidate was

herself. Most likely, the venerable Mother discerned by supernatural illumination that the girl had made the remark not in a spirit of candid simplicity, but in demonstration of her personal worth.

5. We must here observe that Mother Frances often had such supernatural lights as guided her in doubtful cases to a clear perception of the will of God. Thus many instances are related of her indicating to candidates their vocation to her own or to other religious communities. A member of another Order writes: "Next to God, I owe the grace for my vocation to Mother Frances. I had a great preference of the Sisters of the Poor, but when I applied for admission, she said to me: 'Child, you are not called to our work. God destined you for some other Order, in which you will find contentment and happiness.' This came true in the course of time." Another candidate, who was hesitating as to her vocation, went to interview Mother Frances. She regarded the girl intently, and said: "I see St. Francis extending his arms to receive you as his child." These words so impressed the girl as to reassure her concerning her vocation.—To another, applying for admission, she immediately replied: "Yes, you are called to be one of us. I discerned that some years ago, when I met you at the bedside of a sick person." Her judgment was confirmed by the exemplary conduct of the Sister.—An invalid girl applied for admission, though she and all her family were convinced that she had but a short time to live, she wanted to have the privilege of dying a member of the Order. Mother Frances,

however, replied, that she was convinced that God did not intend to have her die so very soon, except in a mystical sense, that is, to the world, and received her. Some years later, when this Sister was admitted to her first vows, she appeared so pale and emaciated that the Sisters expressed their sympathy for her. But Mother Frances observed: "Do but wait until she has made her profession, and you shall see how brisk and strong she shall become." The event proved the truth of this prediction.

6. A certitude like this, derived from higher inspiration, can of course be presumed only in few cases. In general, Mother Frances made use of human means to arrive at a true judgment concerning the pure intention and spirit of candidates. For her own guidance and that of others she wrote a formula of questions to be asked of aspirants for admission.

Despite all these precautions, mistakes relative to the admittance of postulants would sometimes happen. Often the venerable Mother would order candidates to make novenas, and would herself pray fervently for a long time to know the will of God. When she doubted whether or not some other Order would suit the candidate better, she would first send her to a convent of that Order before deciding. Again to others she stated at once that they were called elsewhere. The ready reply of a candidate would sometimes end all doubts. This was the case with good Sister Margaret, who entered as early as 1846, and died in 1873. Being questioned what prompted her to apply for admis-

sion, she replied: "I intend to die well." To another's petition for reception Mother Frances answered: "You do not seem suitable." The girl boldly replied, "Then it will be your fault if I have to remain in the world." Struck by these words, the venerable Mother, whose loving heart after all greatly influenced her judgment, received her, and, as the result proved, in accordance with the will of God. In some cases, when candidates were exposed to great dangers in the world, sympathy with their condition moved her to received them; but at least in one case she had reason to repent of this.

7. Persons desirous of following their vocation to religious life often find great obstacles placed in their way by their families. In several instances parents had recourse to Mother Frances to influence her to refuse admission to their daughters. But when she once believed herself sure of the will of God, her firmness was inflexible. Once, a candidate's mother tried to persuade her to refuse admission to her daughter. She sent for the girl and declared in her short and decisive style: "It is the will of God that I receive you, but I would rather send you home." And, in explanation, she added: "I should liked to have restored the girl to her mother; but I am still more glad to be able to lead a child to St. Francis." In another case even some clergymen and religious supported the family's refusal to grant a daughter permission to join the Order. But Mother Frances remained firm and said: "I clearly discern that it is the will of God that I receive her. Rarely have I examined a candidate so closely; her vocation is undeniably a

true one. Her motives are the purest. Her delicate constitution is counterbalanced by energy and force of will. I can not and will not take back my promise of admission."

8. Mother Frances was convinced that on the good education of postulants, and on the manner in which they are directed during the first years, depends, as a rule, the welfare of the Order and the future life of its individual members. She often deplored the necessity, on account of inevitable circumstances, of sending postulants and novices to branch houses before they had been well trained in the spiritual life. After the expansion of the Congregation she could of course no longer devote herself personally to the education of individual Sisters; but still she kept her eye on each one, and was concerned as much as possible for the progress and spiritual advancement of all, even of those that lived at a distance in branch houses.

Two occasions especially drew forth her motherly solicitude and powerful influence for the perfection of all. The first of these was the frequent vestings and professions, always preceeded by spiritual retreats. During these days of final preparation she would call each one separately to her; and during the solemnity itself she seemed transported by a holy joy. After it, she would read to them, as was remarked elsewhere, the chapter from the "Imitation of Christ" on the wonderful effects of divine love, and impressed them by the inimitable tenderness and force of her manner. Moreover, she would enkindle the hearts of her daughters with the fire of her own indomitable zeal in public and

private addresses. She was an adept at drawing from them holy resolves to esteem the grace of vocation, to offer themselves without reserve to Christ crucified, and to strive with all their might for perfection consisting in the true love of God. She would then remind them of the great happiness of being a chosen child of St. Francis, and tell them how they could and should glorify God, saying with their holy Father: "My God and my all!" and bearing these words in their hearts whilst practising them in their lives. "Above all," she would say, "I rejoice at and esteem it as the greatest grace to to be a child of our holy Father, St. Francis."

9. The other occasion which she improved to exert her personal influence on the Sisters was the spiritual retreat which recurred every year. She took care that even the Sisters that could not take part in it on account of illness should have special conferences in the infirmary by an experienced master in spiritual life. For the retreat, as many Sisters as possible were called to the mother-house, because there they could devote themselves in greater recollection to the spiritual exercises. On these occasions, and likewise during her annual visitations, she would give every Sister an opportunity of conversing privately with her, and of manifesting her temporal and spiritual needs.

10. In a letter written a short time before her death, she expresses her views and desires concerning the life of the Sisters, as follows: "Walk with firm steps in the path of self-abnegation, which maintains us in the presence of God, and leads to union with Him. Let us willingly lose everything

to gain Christ; let us die to self that Christ may live in us. Our sole desire must be to fulfil His holy will and to gain His divine complacency and love. Oh, how happy and contented shall we then be for time and eternity!"

Indeed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matth. V. 3.) For this, the first of the eight beatitudes, not only places all the world at our feet, but also opens to us the treasury of the Great King, and endows the soul with imperishable treasures.

CHAPTER XI.

The same Subject continued.

1. We have repeatedly called attention to the solicitude exhibited by Mother Frances in teaching the Sisters how to live by faith, and thereby to sanctify their laborious duties and great sacrifices, and make them profitable for the interior life and promotive of the glory of God. In the light of faith, daily occurrences and affairs, joys and sufferings appear, and are rendered, spiritual, making it possible for us to walk before God despite the dust impeding our feet, to transform ministrations to man into service of God, and to attain personal perfection. Exhortations to such a mode of life occur often in her numerous written and oral instructions to the Sisters. "What a noble, exalted, but difficult task," she writes, referring to it, to Sister Bonaventure, in 1871; "but to perform it, persevering exertion and self-denial is necessary. Therefore, courage, Sister! If you labor with the grace of God to make what is human in you super-

natural, and if you live solely by faith, you will draw nearer and nearer to the goal." The same sentiments occur in many of her letters.

2. Sister Bonaventure joined the Order in 1849. She was quite young at the time, and was one of the first twenty-three that were admitted to the vows after a novitiate not so regular as was exacted later, because circumstances would not permit it at that early period. She herself told the author how she was initiated by Mother Frances in the service to which the Order was devoted. A corpse was to be prepared for burial. The venerable Mother took the young girl, who had been reared amid quite different surroundings, to assist her in this, to her, novel and dreadful duty. She relates as follows: "In presence of the corpse, Mother said: 'Now let us kneel and first say three Our Fathers for the repose of this soul, and to implore God's grace to perform this duty in the right spirit. Let us consider in this corpse the sacred body of Our Lord, and handle it most reverently.' Then she instructed me what was to be done. When everything was in order, we again knelt and said three Our Fathers to thank God for having made us worthy to do this work of charity for His sake."

The same Sister also informs us with what foresight and charity Mother Frances installed her in her first position of nurse. The Congregation had at that time taken charge of the smallpox patients, who were placed in two large rooms of the Dominican building. For these rooms the postulant had conceived a great horror. Mother Frances led her there and told her to pass through without doing

anything. When she saw how the venerable Mother approached the loathsome patients, comforted them and ministered to them, her own dread disappeared, and on leaving the infirmary she asked for permission to help nursing these patients. It was granted to her, but only by degrees: at first she was restricted to small services, until finally she was permitted to watch with them at night.

3. On the principle that every occupation demanded by obedience is a service of Christ, she often cited the words of Rodriguez, that "in the service of Christ nothing is trifling." Once, correcting a Sister, she added: "Every employment must be regarded as holy, and performed with care and punctuality. A Sister who does not regard her office, be it ever so lowly, as a holy and solemn duty, is not suited for our Congregation." She reminded the Sister that was appointed to read the lives of the saints at table: "Remember that you are unworthy, but that the Lord makes use of you as His instrument to give spiritual nourishment to His community."

It was a principle with her that sacrifices should be made for God alone, without regard to human motives. How dear to her was the observance of this rule, appears from the following example: Several Sisters being on the point of starting for America, one of their number was obliged to remain behind. Immediately another Sister volunteered to take her place. Mother Frances remembered that some time ago this Sister had told her that it would seem difficult to her to return to her duty in the branch house to which she was assigned. She

therefore entertained some doubts whether or not this Sister was influenced by a desire of change, instead of higher motives, to go to America. She informed her of this, telling her to be candid about the matter. If her doubts were verified, she would not send her, well pleased as she was at the offer. The Sister was able to convince her that the offer was sincere, and that her former aversion to the place to which she had been assigned had completely vanished. Thereupon the venerable Mother declared that she rather would have sacrificed the greatest advantages, than permit a Sister to expose her soul to danger on account of an imperfect motive.

4. We have repeatedly observed that she regarded poverty and its faithful observance as the mainstay of her institute. But external poverty without poverty of spirit is rather a fault than a virtue. Poverty of spirit, however, can proceed only from interior wealth, from a higher life and light. Therefore Mother Frances was not content to watch strictly over the external observance of poverty, but sought above all to imbue the Sisters with its spirit and with supernatural motives for its practice. Especially did she insist that the arduous and often humiliating collections should be made in and for the love of Christ, Who became poor for our sake; above all, they should be made with great discretion and without importunity. In a letter written about the middle of the fifties, she expresses the following remarkable sentiments on this subject: "A little gift, asked for the poor in the name of Jesus, is scarcely ever refused. Pious people rejoice at the request to give in this most holy Name; careless

people are reminded of, and dare not resist the sweet power of this Name. Thus the Lord intends, in these times so barren of faith and charity, when so many forget that a drink of cold water given in His name refreshes the Lord Himself, to awaken many a lukewarm soul by means of the quest of the poor children of St. Francis, which quest is to correspond in its methods to poverty and charity. It is one of those methods of silent preaching taught by St. Francis, by which the creature is elevated to the Creator, the soul to God. If we walk faithfully in His rule, His spirit, He will deal with the world through us. Albeit we are unworthy instruments in God's hand, humble representatives of the merits of our great Father, which ought to fill us with confusion, we should nevertheless feel a double incitement to offer ourselves up entirely to the Lord, that He may imbue us with the spirit of His glorious servant St. Francis, and we may thus become, as it were, the instrument by which our holy Father converses with men, his beloved brethren. Behold then, dear Sisters, how by modesty of deportment, by study of mortification, by humility and external poverty, by sentiments and works of charity the spirit of our holy Father should shine forth in us."

5. Sufferings, borne in love, merit a rich reward in heaven. The red cross worn on the scapular by the Sisters after profession, was to remind them of this truth. "The cross which we wear on our breast ought to be implanted also in our hearts," she wrote. And on another occasion she remarks: "This red cross should remind us day and night

that we must crucify ourselves interiorly and exteriorly, and that we must rejoice to be deemed worthy by God to suffer crucifixion by others."

Suffering, without love, is without fruit and full of pain. Alas, even religious are sometimes wanting in adequate love of God, and this deficiency corrupts the fruit of suffering which God intends us to reap. When the fault of excessive self-love, the mother of impatience, is added, new sins and punishments result from the gracious chastisements of Our Heavenly Father.

This sublime truth, so often misunderstood by the world, is of so great importance, that we deem it expedient to introduce the paragraph (80) of the Constitutions, in which Mother Frances instructs and exhorts the sick Sisters on this point.

a) "Suffering is part of the imitation of Christ, Who was tried in all things, and Who says of Himself: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory?" (Luke XXIV. 26.) He rendered suffering sweet by His example, and by the consoling promise: If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified by Him.

b) "God's holy will, which we cannot resist without sin, is revealed also in suffering. A holy simplicity demands that the Sisters manifest their bodily ailments and their interior trials in filial confidence to their Superiors; they ought, after fulfilling this duty, strive to be perfectly resigned with regard to the application of remedies and other medical prescriptions.

c) The Lord chastises them that He loves, and the school of suffering is a specially gracious way

to heaven. Moreover, it is the foremost duty of the Sisters, in illness to offer themselves continually to God as patient victims.

"Content with fulfilling the will of God, suffering Sisters must not regret too seriously that they can do but little, because God demands of them resignation rather than labor. Let sick Sisters regard patient bearing of their illness as their principal duty. Let their couch of pain be their workshop and their altar, the place of their employment and sacrifice."

6. In her letters also, the venerable Mother often recurs to this point, remarking that the Sisters ought to regard it as a grace to share suffering and humiliation with Christ. In a letter written about Easter, 1850, when she was absent from the mother-house on account of sickness, she explains to the Sisters in Aix la Chapelle the words of Christ: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and thus enter into His glory?" and demonstrates that the whole life of Christ was a mystical death, that therefore the life of a true religious must be the same. "If we desire to rise with Christ, we must die to self, die to every inclination to sin, to every imperfection, even the least, die to external consolations by mortifying the senses, die to self-will and self-esteem, die even to spiritual consolations if it be the will of God. The more we die now to self, the greater our glory shall be in heaven."

7. Demands so sublime certainly exceed the faculties of poor human nature, if it has not found with its Redeemer strength from on high, with which Christ before His ascension promised to

replenish His apostles, and did replenish them amid wonderful signs. (Luke XXIV. 49.—Acts II. 1.) For nobody elevates himself above himself, except by a higher power that draws him. Therefore Mother Frances so often inculcated the truth so important in religious life, that interior intercourse with Christ, or interior life is the fundamental principle. "Oh, that we would acknowledge," she said, "that all our misery and all our faults have their source in the fact that we have too little solicitude to foster interior life and the true interior spirit. External activity and employment is of value before God only inasmuch as it is a result of the interior spirit nourished by prayer, that is, of union with God and Our Divine Saviour. Above all, the hearts of persons consecrated to God are destined to become a refuge for Our Divine Saviour, in reparation for the offences continually committed against Him in the world. Oh, that we would regard it as our principal occupation to make reparation and atonement by love and fidelity!"

To a Sister who believed herself called to the contemplative life, she wrote, that St. Francis had a great inclination for contemplation, but finally was instructed by God that he should not abandon his exterior ministry for the salvation of souls; and that he therefore sacrificed to God his personal preference, and remained contemplative in active duty. Love of the contemplative life is inseparable from the spirit of St. Francis. Furthermore, she explains how active and contemplative life is joined in the Congregation like body and soul, saying: "If we should neglect the duties of our vocation

and office, it would certainly not be well, and therefore also against the spirit of St. Francis. However, to strive to be very recollected during the fulfilment of our daily duties, to deny ourselves by suppressing the least evil inclination, thereby preserving interior peace and equanimity, to make good use of the time allotted for prayer and spiritual exercises, to mix not in affairs foreign to God and our duties, to be ever ready to fulfil the duties of charity interiorly and exteriorly — behold, dear Sister, this is to live for God and duty, to live in spirit."

8. Her oral and written instructions on active life comprise especially four points. Firstly, never to make exceptions, without very important reasons, from community life and its practices, especially as regards exercises of piety, and not easily ask the Superiors for exemptions of this kind; "for," she adds explaining this rule, "you must consider that the responsibility is yours whenever you ask the Superior's permission for an exemption."

Secondly: Being herself a great lover of poverty, she inculcated its practice very strictly, and would not allow the Sisters to dispose even of trifles without permission. She would say: "To desire nothing temporal — this is becoming to a Franciscan." She permitted no fault against poverty to pass without reproof and reparation, often making the latter herself to the great confusion of the guilty party.

Thirdly: Above all, she insisted on candor towards the Superiors, and on faithful, punctual obedience. She was wont to say, "If obedience is difficult, remember that the Son of God was obedient

to His executioners." The following instance shows how strictly she could pass sentence on offenses against obedience, even when committed seemingly in good faith. The vesting of a number of postulants was to take place, and the Sister whose duty it was to provide the habits for the novices, fearing lest she might not finish her work in due time, obtained the Mother's permission to work beyond the usual time until ten o'clock in the evening. But Mother Frances had observed light in the work-room after eleven o'clock, and inquired next morning whether the Sister had exceeded the allotted time knowingly or through forgetfulness. The Sister confessed, that because her work proceeded so well, she had presumed permission to add an hour. The venerable Mother immediately had the work brought, and began to undo what had been sewed in that hour, and so zealously did she perform her task that she ripped up rather more. When her Assistant, good Sister Joanna, called her attention to it, she replied: "Better to rip up more, than to let one stitch remain that was done for the devil." Of course her serious proceeding made a greater impression on the Sisters than a lengthy exhortation would have done. In a like manner she also corrected faults against poverty. Thus she once committed to the flames a prayer-book written by one of the Sisters, which had been bound extra fine without sufficient permission.

9. Fourthly: To imbue the Sisters by word and deed with the great fundamental rule of charity given by Christ Himself, without which all other rules are ineffective and useless, was her most

serious concern. She declared that experience had taught her, that Sisters who commenced religious life in great fervor and later relaxed, had begun their slothful life by judging others, and especially Superiors, even if but interiorly. For external faults against charity she demanded immediate reparation, which was the more severe, the more she had confidence in the virtue of the offending Sister. The following instance will serve to show how she acted in such cases.

A very good Sister one morning had a little dispute with her assistant. As it was immediately settled, she did not regard it as a breach of charity. Mother Frances, who had heard of the affair, waited in vain for the Sister to accuse herself of the fault. Before dinner, she intoned the *Miserere*, to the surprise of all, for it was at that time customary to say it on that occasion only after the death of a Sister. Then she explained that the psalm had been said in reparation of an offense against charity. Even this insinuation did not remind the two Sisters of their fault. Towards evening, Mother Frances sent for one of them and addressed her in a serious tone: "I am very much surprised that you did not come to me before." When the Sister declared that she was at a loss to know why, the venerable Mother severely replied: "So you do not feel uneasy at what occurred this morning between you and that other Sister? I was disturbed on your account, and resolved to sleep on the floor to-night in reparation for your fault. Now go at once and ask pardon. Then return to me." The Sister obeyed, and coming back, wept bitterly,

The maternal heart of the Superioress was moved to compassion. She hastened to get a nice pear, which she gave to the disconsolate Sister. The latter's confusion increased at this, and she was persuaded to take it only after repeated reassurances. When she left, the venerable Mother consolingly said: "Now all is well again."

10. Whenever she was obliged to ask a sacrifice of a Sister, which presumably would be difficult to make, she would prepare her for it in a most impressive manner. A Sister writes, that Mother Frances addressed her in preparation for a sacrifice of this kind, in the following words: "Dear Sister, if Our Divine Saviour appeared to you in person and demanded a sacrifice of you, could you refuse it? Oh, no! You would rather deem yourself happy to give Him a proof of your love by the sacrifice. Now behold, the desire and will of Our Saviour is clearly and unmistakably indicated to you by obedience. Therefore prepare yourself, and obey with the same alacrity and devotion, as if you had received the order fron Our Saviour Himself. Be a faithful child of obedience, and you will please Our Saviour." To the same Sister she one day said, with tears in her eyes and in a very plaintive tone: "Oh, dear Sister our Congregation has as yet no saint! How this pains me! Oh, let us endeavor to become saints! God has called you to holiness; you have the talent and grace; opportunity is not wanting. Oh, that you would make good use of it!"

11. Another Sister writes: "After my dear, good mother's death I informed Mother Frances,

that I had offered myself to God to undergo my mother's purgatory. She assented; and as I suffered many interior and exterior trials in consequence, she sympathized with me. One day she sent for me and said: 'I know that you have to suffer a great deal, and yet I must add a new cross to your burden. I made three novenas in order to gain light in the matter. During the third novena, to Our Lady of Victories, it was made clear to me that I must send you to the convicts' reformatory. I cannot do otherwise. What have you to say?' — 'Mother, I shall go!' was my reply. It was a great sacrifice for me. When I passed the cathedral, I went in and knelt in the chapel of the Cross, offering up to God this severe trial of obedience for the repose of my mother's soul. I felt sick and despondent; but scarcely had I set foot in the reformatory — about half-past seven in the evening — when my repugnance and despondency vanished. I was filled with consolation and courage, and was able to perform all the laborious duties of the task assigned me. Three days later, Mother Frances sent for me again. The Superioress had informed her that I was well and cheerful. After I had related to her all the circumstances, she began to weep, and said: 'How very bountiful and good God is! I believe for certain that your mother is released. Oh, how I rejoice for you! Continue to be an obedient child, and you will always preserve your peace of heart.' "
The Sister informs us that she remained in the reformatory for three years, when she again fell ill. Mother Frances unexpectedly called her to join in the general retreat, and afterwards informed her

that she was about to send her to another branch house for the restoration of her health. At the same time she demanded of her another act of obedience, which again was singularly blessed by God. She closes her account with the words: "Thus everything our venerable Mother did or said was blessed and came to a successful issue."

12. When a soul has succeeded in dying to the world, to the flesh and to self-will, so that God is the sole object of her desire, His will her only rule of action, then the words of the Apostle are applicable to her: "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. III. 3.) Then, also, the blessing of God becomes manifest in the work of man, and in man's infirmity becomes visible that divine power, of which St. Paul says that it is "perfection in weakness." In other words: No way leads so securely, so speedily and so sublimely to God as the holy way of the Cross. Crosses and sufferings, borne in love, compensate abundantly for voluntary acts of virtue.

CHAPTER XII.

Her Supernatural Illumination in the Direction of Souls.—Instructions to Superioresses.

1. Judging from the examples thus far adduced, there can be no doubt that God had granted to Mother Frances a rare gift of forming and directing Sisters in their vocation. For this purpose it is not sufficient to follow general rules and methods; they must rather be made applicable to individual needs and to various spiritual conditions. One

word of command may suffice to direct manoeuvers on the field of battle; but direction of souls, like the physician's art demands, besides the application of general rules, due regard to individual conditions. In this respect, Mother Frances was singularly gifted. Her penetration was not merely a natural one perfected by long practice, but was supported by the supernatural light of the Holy Ghost. The lives of the saints abound in examples plainly showing that supernatural illumination enabled them to discern spirits, and to discover secrets that were deeply buried in the hearts of men or concealed by the veil of futurity. Directors of souls and spiritual superiors often possessed this gift in a remarkable degree, that they might thereby be enabled to acquit themselves in a special manner of their duties for the salvation of souls. Nevertheless, we must not think that souls thus favored enjoyed the aid of this illumination at all times and for all purposes, and that they were thereby preserved from every error. The history of the saints showsthat even the greatest amongst them were sometimes left a long time in the dark concerning certain points, and that they were not free from errors of judgment in their relations to others.

2. Crediting the accounts given of the manner in which Mother Frances directed the Sisters, we cannot but believe that she was often guided by a supernatural light which revealed secrets to her. Many Sisters declare their conviction, founded on experience, that she was able to read in their hearts and to discern their very thoughts. This is so much the less surprising, when we remember that

she had been selected by God in a very extraordinary manner to found the Congregation.

First, we notice that she was permitted in many instances to have a knowledge of the state of conscience of others. Many Sisters relate that when they came to the venerable Mother for counsel, or to accuse themselves of little faults, she would reply before she had heard a word, or before she could know, naturally, what they had intended to ask or say. Very frequently she would thus forestall their address in cases of interior trouble or scruples of conscience, or when they stood in need of help and could not have recourse to her.

3. Here are some examples. A Sister knelt in the choir very much troubled whether she might receive holy Communion on the morrow. Quite unexpectedly, Mother Frances stood at her side, laid her hand on her shoulder, and sweetly said: "Sister, on my responsibility receive holy Communion to-morrow." The Sister had mentioned her perplexity to no one. — Another Sister relates a similar instance in her own case, and a third informs us that, filled with anxiety, she knelt in choir, and fervently longed for an opportunity of acquainting Mother Frances with her scruples of conscience. Presently, the latter came to her, and said: "Sister, the guardian angel urged me to speak to you. Come with me." Her instructions calmed all her fears. — A novice was assaulted by temptations against her vocation. The venerable Mother startled her by remarking abruptly: "Child, your vocation is a true one. You will make your profession." Immediately the temptations ceased.

The Sister was in due time admitted to profession, was perfectly content, and lived happily in the Congregation for many years.—A young Sister was awaiting with the rest the beginning of Mass in the chapel, set for half-past seven. It was during a retreat. Troubled interiorly, she thought to herself: "If I could but speak to Mother to-day!" Her turn for an interview with the Superioress General would not come before the end of the week. Mass had not yet begun, and, as if she had read her troubled daughter's desire in her heart, she called her and took her to her room. The Sister concludes: "By her conversation I was convinced that she knew what troubled me. By natural means she could not have gained this knowledge. My heart was filled with gratitude to God and to Mother Frances, who overwhelmed me with proofs of her love."—A candidate, whose parents raised great obstacles against her admission to the Order, had been promised by the venerable Mother to be accepted as postulant on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but on condition that her parents consented. The feast arrived, but the required consent had not been obtained. The candidate knelt in the chapel of a branch house pouring out her troubles before the Sacred Heart, and imploring the hastening of her reception. About the same time, Mother Francesknelt before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of the mother-house. Suddenly she felt a strong impulse to admit the candidate on the very same day. She sent a telegram to the Superioress of the branch house notifying her of this decision. The candidate still knelt in the chapel, when she was informed of the good news.

4. At other times, the venerable Mother would surprise the Sisters by calling their attention to secret faults or transgressions of the rules. The same Sister of whom we related above that she had been counseled by Mother Frances to join some other Order, writes: "Mother Frances would sometimes penetrate to the most secret recesses of one's soul. Once, when I called on her, she said to me: 'Child, to-day you were not entirely candid concerning a certain point.' I had really been guilty of a little prevarication, and on account of it had postponed my confession for two weeks. She continued: 'You have permitted yourself to be influenced by self-love, and therefore postponed your confession.' Shortly before her last illness she said to me: 'As soon as you hear that I am dead pray for my soul.' On taking leave of her before I entered the convent, she remarked: 'Be always candid towards your Superiors, clear and transparent like crystal; you will then not only be happy yourself, but will make others happy also. In all things, go against your own will. If obedience is difficult, remember that the Son of God was obedient to His executioners.'"

5. Another Sister relates the following remarkable occurrence. She had committed a fault of which nobody but herself could have knowledge. In the evening, after she had retired, Mother Frances came to her cell and asked: "Sister, did you not do so and so to-day?" She answered evasively: "What makes you think so?" The venerable Mother replied; "I felt it; I cannot repress the thought. I prayed immediately to the Five Wounds, saying five Our Fathers to ask God's pardon." The Sister then confessed her fault.

Omitting other instances of this kind, we cannot forbear to relate the following. A Sister intended to do a certain work on Sunday not quite in harmony with the sacredness of the day. Nobody knew of her resolve. All at once, Mother Frances approached her saying: "Sister, I was in the chapel, praying. Of a sudden I felt great concern for you. It seemed to me that you were about to begin a piece of work not suited to the holiness of the day." In confusion, the Sister admitted that she had had the intention, and of course now abandoned it.

6. There are also proofs that God sometimes gave knowledge and certitude of future occurrences to Mother Frances. In 1867, typhus broke out in the branch house at Ratingen. Two Sisters had already died of the disease, three were confined to bed by it, and two had been sent to the mother-house. Finally also the Sister to whom we are indebted for this account was attacked and sent to Aix la Chapelle. Mother Frances immediately called on the patient, and observed: "You will not die." Then she sent the Sister that had brought the patient, back to Ratingen, instructing her to tell the Sisters there, that henceforth no other one would be attacked. The event proved the truth of this prediction. Moreover, the Sisters that had last caught the disease, recovered, severe as the attack had been. We mentioned before, (Book II. ch. 11.), that she predicted the end of a disease that had attacked nearly all the Sisters in the branch house of St. John, at Cologne, in 1856, when Cardinal Von Geissel ordered the house closed.—A priest of her acquaintance, whose brother, father of six

children, was ill with consumption, pronounced incurable by the physician, one night received a telegram announcing that his brother's death was expected every moment. Next morning he informed Mother Frances of the dispatch, and said he was perplexed whether he should offer up the Mass he was about to say for a dying, or for a deceased person. She assured him positively: "Your brother will not die as yet." The sick man really recovered, and lived twenty-one years longer, when the account was written.

Whosoever was acquainted with Mother Frances, and knew how cautious she was in her conversation, especially when it related to extraordinary affairs, will not doubt in the least that she was led by supernatural inspiration to make these predictions.

7. Once she ordered a Sister, who had just finished her retreat, to go immediately and visit her father. When the Sister showed surprise and remarked that such great haste did not seem necessary, Mother Frances repeated her order, and added: "You must not delay beyond to-morrow or the next day." The event proved that she was right: the man died within a week, though he had not been ill. She positively assured another Sister, whom she sent to the small-pox hospital, that she would not contract the disease. The Sister actually remained well, despite her long and laborious services in the infected place.

8. We have already mentioned that Mother Frances greatly deplored the necessity in which circumstances often placed her, of appointing very young Sisters as Superioresses of branch houses. In

her letters to these Sisters she never omitted to assist them by instructions and counsel. She refers most frequently to the necessity of fostering their own spiritual life; but also to the manner in which they should fulfil the duties of their office. Above all, she tried to impress them with the heavy responsibility of their office, reminding them that they should accept and acquit themselves of their charge solely from the supernatural motive of fulfilling the will of God. She warned them to beware of a natural attachment for the honors and privileges of their position, because this attachment was generally rooted in pride, arrogance and self-will.

To a Sister that had been Superioress for a long time and now was so no longer, she wrote: "Remember, that in your present position you are free from all responsibility in regard to affairs and to the Sisters. Think and act as if God and your soul were alone in the world, and then show as much charity for the Sisters as you have occasion and is suitable to an inferior. You must sanctify yourself by being blind, dumb and deaf. If you do this from the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in charity, you will merit His approval in a special manner, and draw nearer to Him."

9. For the octave of Pentecost, 1869, she called the Superioresses of all branch houses to the mother-house, and had a retreat preached for their special benefit. In her circular announcing this arrangement, she released them all from their office, and ordained: "You are called to make a retreat. Order your domestic affairs, and arrange everything

in such a manner that there will be no confusion if you should not return to your place." At the close of the retreat she addressed the Sisters, instructing them to offer themselves anew to the Lord. Then she made known the arrangements she had made jointly with her counselors, in consequence of which many were transferred to other positions.

From her address on this occasion, written from memory by one of the Sisters, we give an extract containing her principles concerning the duties of Superiors.

10. She began by declaring that perfect resignation to the will of God is necessary for all. Seek nothing, desire nothing, but the fulfilment of the will of God. Resolve to please God more and more by all you do and do not, thus to become dearer to Our Divine Saviour: this is to be the fruit of the retreat. She had sufficient confidence in them to believe that they all entertained these sentiments, and were ready to be relieved from the burdensome responsibility of their office. But as the evil spirit and corrupt nature never sleep, other thoughts might arise, to combat which was our duty. Concerning the duty of Superiors she remarked: "The first principle and care of Superiors must be to have each Sister sanctify herself. In this respect good example is of paramount importance." She lays great stress on the damage occasioned by the absence of good example; even virtuous Sisters might be induced to form rash judgments, and disquietude of conscience, and other dangerous effects would result.

Secondly, she insists that the deportment of Superiors be animated throughout by charity. "Firmness must be tempered by mildness; but let there be no excessive delicacy, degenerating into weakness and fearfulness of correcting faults lest one should lose the affection of the Sisters. This would be dangerous self-love and self-seeking, to beware of which I can not warn you too seriously."

Thirdly: "Let corrections be calm, quiet and forbearing, in true charity. Maintain the true mean between severity and mildness, inclining rather to the latter than the former. Do not deem it essential to correct every fault immediately, always ready with the rod; do not correct the faults of others in a manner that leads you to commit greater ones yourself." She cites the example of Moses. She reminds the Superiors that that they should combine the seriousness and firmness of a father in giving commands, with the love and benignity of a mother in administering reproofs.

Fourthly: Firmness must not be confounded with obstinacy and with the notion of knowing everything better than others. Superiors are indeed bound to use all the means at their disposal to arrive at a true conception of affairs, but they must also know how to yield, especially to higher Superiors.

Fifthly: All intimacies and particular friendships are to be avoided. One must not be preferred before the other; none must be repulsed and shunned. In this also, the example of a good mother is to be followed: she regards the sick or wayward child as most in need of her love. With

such treatment it will almost always be possible to to get along with every Sister. Let the Superiors remember that their inferiors are not permitted to choose their Superiors according to their preferences, but must submit to every kind of character. They are told to regard their Superiors with the eye of faith, not in their human capacity, but as taking the place of God. The Superiors must regard their inferiors in the same spirit.

Then follow exhortations on various subjects, especially on the observance of poverty; on the method of collecting; on religious modesty and reserve in their intercourse with each other; on faithful adherence to the rule and daily order; on the duty of Superiors not to claim exemptions from the rule and community exercises; not to make unnecessary journeys or visits; not to ask permission to visit the mother-house except for cause: in fine all should strive to bear in common the burden and heat of the day. Then she announced that she had for several days considered the feasibility of removing all the local Superioresses, and "to let the field lie fallow for a while that later it might bring forth so much more and better fruits," that she even had intended to give up some branch houses on this account, but her efforts in this direction had been in vain. She concluded: "Dear Sisters, during these days you saw me serious and troubled. The reason was, because these days of Pentecost reminded me of the inception of our Congregation, and how signally God protected and blessed it. This remembrance affected me greatly; it encourages me and gives me strength to continue

in my office. Where I not confident of God's assistance, I should resign. Let us now, dear Sisters, kneel and offer ourselves anew to Our Dear Saviour as instruments that place themselves entirely at His disposal. For this purpose let us recite in common the prayer of St. Ignatius:

"Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. Thou hast given me all that I am and all I possess; I surrender it all to Thee that Thou mayest dispose of it according to Thy will. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will have no more to desire."

CHAPTER XIII.

The "May Laws" and their Consequences.

1. In the last chapter of Book II. we interrupted our account of the life of Mother Frances at the time when the so-called "May Laws" threatened disruption and ruin to most religious Orders in Germany. After the victorious war with France, non-Catholics in Germany deemed the time had arrived in which to complete what the House of Hohenstaufen, and the so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century had not achieved, that is, to destroy the influence of the papacy, or, in other words, to ruin the Catholic Church in Germany. At first, the attainment of this result was sought by means of the so-called "Old-Catholic" movement, which aimed at supplanting the divine universal Church by a human state Church; but this attempt proved futile. Then the power of the Law was invoked:

legal paragraphs, police surveillance, imprisonment — in a word, all the machinery of state interference was resorted to in order to suppress the free agency of the Church, to divert and obstruct her life-giving sources, and thus to condemn her to a lingering death. Under Prince Bismark's command the enemy's army, composed of the most heterogeneous elements, engaged in the attack. To facilitate proceedings, the constitution of the country was revised, laws followed upon laws, and were soon branded by the now ominous name of "*May Laws*," under which appellation they are perpetuated in history, though their legal existence lasted only for a comparatively short period. The history of this *Kulturkampf* does not belong here; we refer to it only in so far as it influenced the life of Mother Frances.

2. She, of course, was heart and soul with the Church. Her resolute character spurned neutrality. Though not denying to the state a certain right of supervision concerning the external ministry of the Congregation, and aware that even unwarranted interference with it was to be tolerated under the circumstances in order to escape greater evils, she nevertheless was inflexible when there was question of the liberty of the real or interior life of the Order. Religious Orders are institutions of the Church and subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Mother Frances would have rather died a thousand times before she would consent to making her Congregation a state institution.

3. In persuance of these, to her, vital principles there arose many complications and difficulties,

because the views, even of Catholics, as to how far concessions might be made to the state, were at variance. The mode of application and execution of the laws, too, was different according to places and functionaries. There were not a few political schemers who made the most of their right of surveillance over the Sisters and their charitable work; others, again, were humane and lenient in their interpretation of the laws.

In addition to the perplexity occasioned by the question of how far obedience to the laws was permissible, there was also the uncertainty, how far the government would extend its prohibitions in the future. Above all, Mother Frances feared that demands might be made which would result in suppressing ministrations to the sick, the teaching Orders having already been banished, and that her community, too, would be compelled to seek liberty of conscience in exile. At all events, she was convinced that compromises rashly made would result in serious consequences.

4. In this period of trial Mother Frances had recourse to prayer more frequently than ever. In May, 1873, she wrote to one of her spiritual advisers: "The conjunctures of the present time tend to make one have special confidence in God, Who is powerful in the weak. May the persecutions result in giving us saints. Considering the goodness and mercy of God we are entitled to this hope."

5. Mother Frances prepared her Congregation for the storm by invoking God's protection, and for this purpose she solemnly consecrated it to the Sacred Heart. On the octave of the feast of the

Immaculate Conception she addressed the following circular to her houses:

"The following is to be read in the afternoon of the feast of the Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 18th,) about two o'clock, before a picture of the Sacred Heart. Afterwards, the prayers on the inclosed leaflet are to be recited.

"St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, says: 'He (Christ) loved me, and delivered Himself for me.' What the Apostle says here, may be said by each one of us, entirely and without reserve: 'He loved me, and delivered Himself for me.' — Divine Saviour, how Thy love for me must inspire me to love Thee in return! Thou sayest of Thyself that Thou didst come to send fire upon the earth and desirest it to burn. Grant us, then, what Thou commandest through love for us, and deign to accept this our homage, which we desire to render Thee in love, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, Thy Mother and ours."

6. On the 27th of February, 1874, she received a letter from the police authorities, directing her to give the names of all the Sisters in the mother-house and in the Dominican building, and to answer various questions. She regarded this request as the beginning of the dreaded state surveillance. Meanwhile, the effects of the May Laws became more and more evident. The Jesuits, Redemptorists and Lazarists had already been banished, to the greatest grief of Mother Frances, who had sustained spiritual relations with them all, and was much indebted to them, as she gratefully acknowledged. On the 3d of February, 1874, the arch-

bishop of Gnesen-Posen, Ledochowsky, was imprisoned. The same fate was in store for many other bishops, and amongst them for her own Ordinary, the archbishop of Cologne.

At this juncture, Mother Frances, in the name of the Congregation, addressed a letter to him, expressive of her admiration of his fortitude, and of her fidelity and devotion. The title-page of this address was embellished by an ornate miniature, containing the Franciscan cross surrounded by rosebuds, and in the initial letter was inscribed the following prayer to the Sacred Heart: "O God, Who didst liberate the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, from prison, we beseech Thee to undo the fetters of our Holy Father. Accept us as victims for Pius IX. and our dear Archbishop Paul, and preserve the Church from the evils with which she is threatened. — Pray for us, holy Apostles, Peter and Paul: that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."

To this address she received the following reply:

"Venerable Mother! I express my most heartfelt gratitude for the token of sincere sympathy and loving devotion by which the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, in the spirit of their holy Father, evinced their adhesion to the persecuted Spouse of Our Divine Saviour, our Mother, Holy Church, her Supreme Head, and her ministers. I noted it with consolation and joy, and confidently hope that you and your dear Sisters will obtain from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, during the impending storms and trials, for my weakness the grace of fortitude and constancy by your prayers and charitable ministrations. With friendly greeting and episcopal blessing — Paul, Archbishop."

The archbishop had been imprisoned on the 31st of March, during Holy Week, amid the tears and lamentations of clergy and people.

7. A few days previously, on Passion Sunday, Mother Frances had written the following letter to Sister Gabriela, Superioress of the branch house in Coblenz: "The feast of the archangel St. Gabriel, formerly a day of rejoicings, will this year be a day of mourning: orphaned, or about to be orphaned dioceses! Who would have imagined this last year? And yet our hopes must rather be buoyed up than depressed by what has happened, and by the present state of affairs. Let us trust in God! Even if the sorest trials are yet in store for us, an angel Gabriel, a messenger of God will finally announce glad tiding to us. How long the imprisonment of the Archbishop of Cologne will yet last, nobody knows. I visited him, and was edified at the fortitude and cheerfulness of our dear Father. Let us pray and hope. God will so dispose that everything will result for the welfare of His Church."

Already on the 30th of January, Mother Frances had ordered special prayers to be said by the Sisters. She said in her circular: "From Septuagesima till Easter the fourth penitential psalm, the *Memorare*, the offering of the Most Precious Blood, 'Eternal Father,' etc. and the blessing of St. Francis shall be recited in the mother-house and in the branch houses of our Congregation for its welfare and for the needs of Holy Church."

This year, and the one before, she would not permit her saint's day to be celebrated. Instead, she addressed the following circular to the Sisters:

"Dear Sisters in Christ! Our holy Mother, St. Clare, in her testament, tells her daughters that amongst the benefits which they had received, and continued daily to receive, through the bounty of the Father of mercies, and for which they ought to thank and praise Him, their vocation was the greatest, and the most perfect, the one above all for which they owed Him gratitude. How thoroughly, then, must we also be penetrated with gratitude to God for having been chosen children of St. Francis, and spouses of Jesus Christ! How great must be our solicitude, and how diligently must we strive, physically and morally, to fulfil the duties of our vocation! However, to fulfil the vows we have made to God, it is necessary above all that we prove ourselves true, genuine children of obedience, in faithful imitation of St. Francis, who could say of himself, that by the grace of God he was ready to obey and reverence the youngest novice appointed by his Superior, as readily as the oldest member of the Order, in imitation of Our Divine Saviour Himself, Who was obedient to the death of the cross. Let the Sisters therefore remember that they have for the love of God renounced their own will, and consequently their liberty and independence, in order to live, in common, a life pleasing to God, in humility, obedience and subjection to their Superiors, and in charity and concord among themselves. Yes, dear Sisters, above all other virtues, I recommend to you holy obedience. Thereby you prove your love of God, if for love of the Creator you subject yourselves to His creature, as Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, did and practised for your example. Let us,

therefore, all of us, to-morrow consider the golden words of St. Francis: 'Dearly beloved and ever-blessed Sisters! Hearken to me, hear the voice of your Father: Great are the things we have promised, but greater things are promised us; let us observe the former and strive for the latter. Pleasure is brief — punishment is everlasting. Suffering is slight — glory eternal. Many are called, few are chosen: all shall receive according to their works. Whilst we have time, let us work good to all.' (Gal. VI. 10.)

"Dear Sisters! Twenty-nine years have now elapsed since the Congregation came forth, as it were, out of the hands of St. Francis by the most holy will of God. It is not man's, but God's work. Therefore let us be faithful, in order that the Lord, Who gave so favorable a beginning to our dear Congregation, may continue to guide, preserve and improve it in all good works for the honor of God, the glory of the Church, and the salvation of its poor members. Amen."

8. In the following year, 1875, the law suppressing convents was promulgated. All religious Orders not devoted exclusively to the service of the sick, were abolished. The institution of the School Sisters were closed; the communities devoted to the service of the sick were placed under strict police surveillance. Even the few cloistered Poor Clares and Carmelite nuns were regarded as a danger to the government, and were ordered to disband.

9. Amid these distressing circumstances two virtues shone forth in Mother Frances: her prudence and her firmness, as may be gathered from her

letters. On the 18th of June, 1875, she wrote: "We proceed as slowly as possible; but you can scarcely realize how we are harrassed. A nature less calm than mine would succumb. As in the fable of the ass, the most contradictory counsels are repeated to me ten and twenty times a day. I try to remain calm, believing it best to await every moment the indication of the will of God. One's only refuge is the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

On the 22d of July, she wrote to one of the Superioresses: "Lately the Sisters in most of our branch houses were annoyed by questions of the government officials, so that I am quite busy answering their letters. In order not to incur suspicion of assenting to the law concerning convents, which would be a betrayal of Holy Church and an enslavement of the Congregation, the enclosed declaration is to be made in my name. I think you in Coblenz will not be molested, in deference to Her Majesty, the empress."

On the 30th of July she sent her declaration to the government, as answer to a circular she had received, in which she was requested to reply to a number of questions concerning the mother-house and its branch establishments. She promptly answered all the questions concerning the external state of the Congregation; to those relating to the religious life of the Sisters she replied:

"The statement demanded of me is without doubt intended to serve as a basis for the state's supervision of our Congregation. It contains questions that seem to imply that the state will not permit a free disposition of our means of support, and the

unrestrained disposal of the members of the Congregation, and that consequently their employments will be interfered with, if not entirely suppressed, whereby especially the ecclesiastical character of the Congregation would suffer. As long as this my view of the statement does not prove to be a misconception, I regret to have to decline having it made."

In explanation and support of the above reply, she wrote, on the 1st of September, the following letter to her majesty, the empress:

"Most gracious Empress! Your Majesty but a short time ago showed so much love and sympathy for the poor children of St. Francis and their unworthy representative, that only in view of God, the source and centre of everything good and sublime, I can understand and accept such condescension. The more, however, my heart is penetrated with fervent gratitude, love and veneration for our country's dear Mother and Mistress, the more do I feel myself obliged to indicate clearly and truly the motives of the enclosed declaration.

"There being question of making a statement which, even in its tendency, deeply affects religious life, I deemed it my duty, after candidly replying to some of the inquiries therein contained, to refuse to answer those that concern the essentials of religious life. Moreover, I also felt bound to protest against the restriction of the free disposal of our means, and of the liberty of the members of the Congregation, which, to my view, it contains. The reasons given in my declaration, 'interference with, or even suppression of the Congregation, and above

all, injury to its ecclesiastical character,' are of such weight, and the consequences so far-reaching, that Your Majesty certainly will understand and not disapprove of the refusal reluctantly made by the Congregation. However, should my view concerning the restriction of the liberty of the members, etc. be erroneous, should there be intended and requested simply a notice, however often to be repeated, we are willing to give it at all times, as indicated at the close of my declaration. But to obtain the state's permission as to the disposal to be made of the Sisters—which would be a restriction of ecclesiastical rights and of the freedom of our Congregation — I shall never consent. We have tried hitherto, even amid many and various vexations by the authorities, to continue the exercise of our vocation in our houses. Moreover, after submitting my declaration, I made such changes of *personnel*, as were absolutely necessary, without applying for permission; but for months already I have refrained from receiving new members, in in order not to increase the difficulty of providing a refuge for our already numerous community in case we should be banished. But it can not go on much longer in this manner. Several Sisters died meanwhile; some fell sick, and the work in the thirty branch houses which we have in our country increases from year to year. Your Majesty will please pardon me for speaking to my most benign Empress and our country's Mother like a child making a mother's heart the depository of her little troubles. For I know that where holy love of God is enthroned, there is need of but few

words. Our Divine Saviour, our most sublime Model, knew what Mary and Martha wanted when they sent for Him, saying: 'Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.' Your Majesty, the children of St. Francis, and the members of all the religious Orders of Germany, are grievously oppressed. Much as they are willing to give to Caesar what is Caesar's, yea, even their life-blood, they also, and above all, desire to give to the Lord, and His Spouse, the Church, what is God's, and are ready to suffer persecution, ignominy, pain, a thousand deaths for their holy faith. — God be most benignly with your Imperial Majesty! May He bless and direct your endeavors to His honor and glory! Permit a poor child of St. Francis to express for Your Majesty sentiments of a most profound reverence, with which I remain, etc. Sister Frances Schervier."

10. The empress did what was in her power to mitigate, for the female Orders, the practical application of the law. On the 12th of September she directed her intimate friend, Countess Hacke, to reply to Mother Frances as follows:

"Reverend Mother Superior! Her Majesty, the empress, read your letter of the 1st inst. with great sympathy, and perceived that you are in great distress. Her Majesty commissions me to write to you and to comfort you in every way, because meanwhile new orders concerning the investigations to be made have been given by the authorities. You will receive them in a few days. According to these there is at present no question of restricting or subordinating the Orders relative to their temporal administration, and concerning govern-

mental supervision no determination has been arrived at so far. Inquiries about individual rights of property will not be made. The removal of Sisters from one house to another is not subject to approval, a monthly notice of the changes is sufficient. As these concessions were obtained principally at the instance of the empress, Her Majesty hopes that you, dear Mother Superior, will readily yield to the authorities, as they will not insist on anything except what the law compels them to demand. In detail, dear Reverend Mother, you will have to acknowledge the right of the state concerning the permission to receive new members; you must give the date of each Sister's admission, and make a statement of the property of the Order. On these matters the authorities are obliged to insist. Her Majesty now entreats you to do your share in avoiding any collision with the authorities. You well know how devoted the empress is to your Order and how she cherishes it; and even from this consideration you must do everything in your power to obviate dissensions. You must regard it as a trial to which you have to submit with humble resignation. The empress is the more aggrieved at your refusal in Aix la Chapelle, because here in Coblenz all the various religious establishments have most readily answered all inquiries, and for this reason enjoy the full sympathy and even the advocacy of the authorities. Transmitting to you greeting from the empress, I hope to hear from you at an early date, and remain, etc. Countess Hacke."

Mother Frances replied to this letter:

"The government official, Herr von Leipziger,

was here last Saturday to advise me of what you had the kindness to inform me by order of Her Majesty in your favor of the 13th inst. concerning the free disposition of the means of support of the Congregation, and the free disposal of the members. Of course I expressed my joy and gratitude to the official at this communication, and promised to comply punctually with the demands. We are thereby, as long as permitted by the authorities, enabled to continue in our ministrations to the best of our abilities, the more so because they are already somewhat contracted by being restricted to the service of the sick. Although I could not accede as he wished to other requests of the official, I nevertheless hope to God that the matter will be settled according to Her Majesty's desire. Affairs have already improved so much that the continuation of our branch houses is assured, for which we cannot sufficiently thank Her Majesty. I think we shall also succeed in retaining the mother-house without injury to its interior organization. With reverent homage to Her Majesty, and grateful acknowledgment of your kindness, I remain, etc., Sister Frances Schervier, Superioress of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis."

11. As a result of her conference with Herr von Leipziger, Mother Frances petitioned the government for permission to receive members. The answer was in the negative, and the work of the Sisters was more and more contracted. All the children in the branch houses, even those over school age, had to be dismissed. On the 21st of September the venerable Mother received notice

that the seven Sisters engaged in the convicts' reformatory would have to withdraw before the end of the year. On the 22nd of November came the order that the collections were to cease on the 31st of December. This was a heavy blow to the poor and sick in charge of the Sisters. The charity kitchens in Aix la Chapelle were closed on the 6th of January, 1876. The asylum of fallen women was also ordered closed, but was finally permitted to be continued as a state institution under certain conditions. The servants' homes in Aix la Chapelle, Duesseldorf and Cologne were suppressed, but benevolent Catholic ladies reopened and took charge of them. The Sisters were allowed to do servants' work there, but had to live in a different part of the house, separate from the other inmates.

12. The high esteem in which other religious congregations held Mother Frances, induced several of them to have recourse to her in these difficulties, and she was ever ready to do them any service in her power. At the request of the Superioress of the Congregation of the Divine Infant, she went to Berlin on the 4th of January, 1876, to interview the empress. The May Laws had forced this Congregation to withdraw from its school and orphan asylums, and as a consequence, the members saw themselves compelled to emigrate. But as only a very short time was allowed them for the settlement of their affairs, they hoped for a reprieve through the influence of the empress. The Superioress General of the Congregation, Mother Clare Fey, was ill; therefore she begged her life-long friend, Mother Frances, to make the journey to Berlin for

her, and to deliver and explain her petition to the empress. The latter received her and her attendant, Sister Bernardine, most graciously, but could do little, or nothing, for the object that had brought them to Berlin.

13. Sometimes the best endeavors of saintly souls find not only opposition and obstacles, but miscarry entirely. The pilgrim's paths through mortal life are dark, and often his thoughts and ways do not coincide with the thoughts and ways of God. We are not permitted to look beyond the veil of the future, or before us in advance of our steps. Let us, instead, abandon ourselves to the guiding hand of Our Father until the night is over and full day-light appears. The *thoughts* of saints may sometimes be led astray, yet their *ways* do not mislead, for in their mind "the night is passed and the day is at hand" (Rom. XIII. 12.); the aurora is risen, and Christ, the glorious, everlasting Light is their guiding star, assuring them: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me walketh not in darkness." (John VIII. 12.)

CHAPTER XIV.

New Trials. — Deaths. — Last Profession. — Last Election. — Two Branch Houses in Belgium.

1. To give an uninterrupted account of the consequences of the May Laws, as far as they affected Mother Frances, we omitted some details, which we now add. The cross which she had to bear during the last four years became heavier and heavier, as is generally the case in the lives of the saints.

Not only were the May Laws a severe blow, but the death of many Sisters, and of devoted clerical friends affected her deeply. On the 21st of August Sister Margaret Hamacher died. She had been one of the first to enter, and received the habit in 1851. She was a most pious, dutiful and charitable Sister. In the death of her Assistant, Sister Joanna, which occurred on the 25th of September, 1874, Mother Frances sustained a still greater loss. This Sister had been Superioress of the mother-house since 1869, and attended to her duties so faithfully, that it was difficult to fill her place. The Sisters loved her for her virtues like a second Mother. On the 30th of May, 1876, occurred the death of Sister Clare, also one of the first Sisters, and very dear to the venerable Mother, and on the 19th of June, 1876, Sister Augustine died. She had received the habit on the 24th of November, 1854, and had been the first Superioress in America. After being relieved of this charge, she was stewardess of the mother-house for many years. At her death Mother Frances shed many tears, and remarked, that in her the Congregation had lost one of its main supports.

2. Two clergymen, also, who had proved themselves firm friends of Mother Frances and the Congregation, died during this period of trial. On the 9th of October, 1872, the archiepiscopal Commissary, the Rev. Canon Dilschneider, expired a victim of apoplexy. The Rev. Dr. Kloth, often mentioned in connection with the beginning of the Congregation, died of old age on the 18th of July, 1876. For thirty years he had showed a fatherly

interest in the Congregation, and as he had given the habit to nearly all the Sisters, he was wont to call himself its "grandfather."

3. These deaths sensibly affected the heart of Mother Frances, and impressed her with the thought of the approach of her own dissolution. Thus she writes on June 27th, 1876: "To see one dying, teaches how to die. This is a solemn truth. Man has nothing to do in this world but to prepare for a good death."

4. Meanwhile, consolations were not wanting. Amongst these must be reckoned a visit of the truly apostolic Bishop of Mayence, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler. On the 26th of August 1873, he gave the habit to twenty postulants, amongst whom was one of his relatives, Maria, Baroness von Ketteler, and also Anna, countess von Stolberg.

A great consolation to Mother Frances was also the profession of twenty-three novices on the 19th of November, 1876, the last one at which she presided. She had been very solicitous to prepare the Sisters well by a retreat, just as if she felt that her life was drawing to a close. She was greatly moved during the ceremony, and when the young Sisters afterwards came to the chapter-room, she greeted them with the words: "Thanks be to God that you are so far!" as if to insinuate that it was well she had lived to accomplish it. Then she continued very solemnly: "Dear Sisters! The principal object of our Congregation is the conversion of sinners. Each one of us must consider the salvation of souls her first duty. Still more, we must be careful not to wound Our Saviour anew by our own sins."

Then, reassuming her usual benign expression, she asked: "Have I nothing for my children?" And turning to the mistress of novices, she said: "I have a plate of apples upstairs; go and bring them." After it had been done, she gave each Sister the half of an apple, saying: "Eat, Sisters; the Spouse in the Canticle of canticles ate apples too." Half an apple remaining over the mistress remarked: "This is for you, dear Mother."—"No," she replied, "you must eat it; I am too old."

5. She rejoiced at having succeeded in establishing a branch house in Frankfort on the Main before it had been rendered impossible by the prohibition of the government. For a beginning, three Sisters were sent there. The undertaking had been accomplished with the assistance of the Rev. Dean Münzenberger. At Duesseldorf, another plan, that had occupied the attention of Mother Frances for a long time, namely, the establishment of a novitiate separate from the mother-house, was realized in 1875, but had to be abandoned the following summer on account of the disturbances of the times.

6. During this whole period, with its severe trials and difficulties, Mother Frances felt the burden of her office growing heavier and heavier. Feeling moreover that her strength was waning, while the demands on it grew from day to day, she believed herself unable to fulfil her duties, and justified, on that account, in resigning her office. She reminded the Sisters of the example of St. Francis, who also had resigned the government of the Order. Her term of office had been twice

lengthened, at the request of her council, by the archbishop of Cologne, owing to the troubled condition of affairs. Finally, fearing that still greater difficulties might arise, he ordered the canonical election to be held. But to obviate the necessity of so many Sisters travelling to the mother-house, he directed that the votes of the Sisters in the branch houses should be given there, the confessor presiding and receiving the ballots. These were then sent sealed to the mother-house, where the archiepiscopal Commissary opened them and announced the result.

7. Mother Frances was again unanimously elected, but refused peremptorily to accept the office. "I can not and dare not accept," she declared. "The term is six years, and I shall not live so long. Moreover, I must now consult the welfare of my soul and prepare for death. The Most Rev. Archbishop is aware of this, for I made a general confession to him before the election. He knows my reasons." She wrote immediately to the archbishop, imploring him to annul the election. Neither the remonstrances of the Commissary, nor the tears of the Sisters moved her. She considered herself relieved of her office, and would not fulfil its duties, to the great consternation of the Sisters. Meanwhile, her firmness was subjected to severe tests. Good old Sister Josepha, very dear to the venerable Mother on account of her simplicity and great virtue, went to her, and said: "Oh, Mother, do receive us again for your children!" — "No," she replied, "I cannot." — "How can you say so," rejoined the Sister; "in

these troubled times you act like a soldier deserting during the time of war." Mother Frances smilingly replied: "But I do not desert you, I am with you." — "Well, then remain at your post!" — She was deeply affected when Sister Clare, mentioned before, conjured her from her sick-bed to accept the result of the election, and added: "I have offered myself in sacrifice for the Congregation, and for the good issue of this affair." When the good Sister died quite unexpectedly next morning, Mother Frances, in presence of the corpse, said with great emotion: "Here lies the victim of the Congregation. Sister Clare offered herself a sacrifice for it yesterday, and her offer was accepted." She went away weeping, but still adhered to her resolution. Next day, May 31st, she received the following letter from the archbishop:

"Venerable Mother! In times of trial and difficulty like the present, you above all must not decline the office to which you have been elected. This is my conviction, and the declaration of my will. God will assist you. What would you say of a shepherd who left his flock in the hour of attack? — Commending you to God — † Paul, Archbishop of Cologne."

She obeyed without delay, offering up this to her so great a sacrifice for the welfare of the Congregation. Soon after, she related to the Sisters a dream she had had, of seeing Sister Assistant Joanna coming to her, and saying: "Mother, do not refuse to take the cross upon your shoulders: it is not for long."

8. For a time, it seemed as if the Sisters would

have to leave the country. Mother Frances writes on the 22d of February, 1876: "Here in Prussia we are no longer permitted to receive postulants, and of late we sent all applicants to America. Eventually, we shall perhaps have to go there ourselves. In the end, it is all the same where one goes: God, and employment in our vocation, is to be found everywhere. Should your branch house be the first to be closed, come home to the mother-house — and then away to America, if so it must be. Meanwhile, trust in God. As to our ministrations, we must suffer them to be curtailed, if necessary; but our religious exercises must remain intact. If not, we shall serve God elsewhere. We must be pilgrims and strangers on earth."

9. In view of the possible suppression of the Congregation in Prussia, the necessity of looking about for a refuge somewhere else was obvious. Some of the Sisters urged her to found a branch house and novitiate in Belgium. She therefore purchased a house in Enghien, and after long deliberations resolved to build another near Verviers, which was to serve as a novitiate. The plans were submitted to and approved by her, and their execution entrusted to a Belgian architect, under the supervision of her Assistant and another Sister. But as the building progressed, it proved quite contrary to the expectations and wishes of Mother Frances, being more like a palace than a convent. She was painfully surprised on seeing it, and could not conceal her vexation at this breach of poverty. It is said, she went aside and wept bitterly. She never entered the house, and it was

never used for a convent. Later, it was sold at a great loss.

10. As God presents to everyone arriving at the years of discretion, a particle, so to say, of His cross: thus He also graciously visits every religious community with afflictions, as soon as it has arrived at a certain state of maturity. The more a community increases in numbers, the greater becomes the danger of losing unity of spirit and purity of intention. The cross, borne in common, has the power of uniting hearts and purifying the spirit.

CHAPTER XV.

Last Illness, Death and Burial of Mother Frances.

1. Mother Frances had a presentiment of her death for some time before she was attacked by her last illness. It is related, that in the autumn of 1876, standing at a window one day, she contemplated the falling leaves, observing to a Sister: "Behold the image of life! Only a little while longer, and we too shall go in the way of all perishable things, and die. So many around us have already fallen off, that we are like a leafless tree." At the beginning of November, in the year mentioned, she visited for the first time the branch house in Enghien, Belgium. This village being in the neighborhood of Bois d'Haine, the home of the celebrated ecstatic Louise Lateau, it was suggested, that she visit her. "No," she replied, "first I must visit and console my banished children. They are dearer to me than a visit to Louise Lateau." Arriving at Enghien on the evening of the 2d of

November, her daughters intended to greet her with a hymn composed especially for the occasion; but she bade them to omit it on account of All Souls' day, saying she felt too much affected. Next day she remarked: "Who knows, if and when we shall meet again?" In the afternoon she went to visit Louise Lateau, returning the same evening to Enghien. She said to the Sisters: "To remain only a half day with you seemed rather short, when you have to make so many sacrifices." She related her impressions of the ecstatic, and remarked, that in Holland she had seen another similarly favored, who had made even a greater impression on her. Taking leave of the Sisters, she wept, and all wept with her. It seemed as if they had a foreboding of her approaching death, which occurred five weeks later.

The last notice in her memorandum-book fully bears out what we are saying, and at the same time informs us of other sentiments which she entertained then. "When I ask Our Divine Saviour during meditation what he desires of me, I seem always to hear the reply: 'Love, love!' This is in full conformity with my disposition since childhood. When I go on asking Him: 'Lord, what must I do to satisfy Thee? Help me to make a beginning!' I feel as if my soul must first be cleansed by a retreat, so as to receive more light, strength and grace. It seems, as if it were the highest time for me to make a beginning, yea, *as if but little time remained for me* to fulfil, according to God's will, the task imposed on me. . . . Meanwhile, I must permit myself to be made use of by God, and there-

fore ought to be in a suitable condition: and here is where I fail. I feel clearly that I place obstacles to the Lord by my unfaithfulness and imperfections."

She was right: only a brief space of time remained for her; little was left for her to do, but much to suffer. The retreat she desired to make was given her by God Himself, Who, in final purification, sent her sickness, suffering and death.

2. Mother Frances was taken ill on the feast of St. Andrew, Apostle, November 30th, 1876. She had joined in all the exercises from early morning of that day, and assisted the Sisters in their work after dinner. Soon afterwards, she was attacked by vomiting, and suffered great pain. She ascribed it to dyspepsia, because she had forced herself to eat without appetite of the lenten meal. The increasing pain compelled her to go to bed. Next day, when the pains continued, she became suspicious that they might have their origin in some other ailment. She bade a Sister to examine her, and was found to be suffering from an inveterate rupture. The physician, Dr. Schervier, a relative, and another whom he called in for consultation, did all in their power to relieve her. Towards evening they came to the conclusion that an operation alone could save her life, and with her consent, it was performed that same evening.

Her confessor, Father Bonaventure Wessendorf, a Franciscan, informs us as follows concerning her interior disposition: "The illness of Mother Frances was not only attended by great pain, but also by circumstances of a kind at which

nature most recoils. Some time before she had told me, that in an operation she would not dread fire, but the knife. She did not conceal her natural fear of the operation; nevertheless, she had resolved to submit to it even before the physicians had decided on its necessity. When I reminded her that she must be prepared to suffer, she replied: 'I place myself beneath the cross, and all will go well.'"

At the operation, which, though successful, did not remove the danger, the physicians discovered that the evil, which had manifested itself so suddenly, was of long standing. She desired and received Extreme Unction and General Absolution next morning. To the pastor, Rev. Mr. Baum, who administered the sacraments, she remarked: "Remember me, when I shall be no more."

3. The news of her illness spread quickly, not only in the houses of the Congregation, but far and wide, so that it can be truly said that thousands implored Heaven for her life. After four or five days, when the danger of inflammation was over, there was some hope, but the patient's increasing weakness occasioned uneasiness.

During her illness she evinced intrepid patience and perfect resignation to the will of God. She never uttered a word of complaint, nor did she express a wish of any kind; but docile and obedient like a child, she suffered herself to be treated as the physicians and Sisters thought best. Her extraordinary calmness, interior peace and holy indifference about the affairs of the Congregation appeared strange and alarming to those around her. She no

longer gave orders, but seemed to consider her task done, and to have resigned everything into the hands of her Heavenly Father. A letter from a distance increased the Sisters' apprehensions. The writer knew nothing of the illness of Mother Frances, but felt an inexplicaple uneasiness concerning her health, and wrote to inquire, relating a dream she had had of seeing the venerable Mother dying. Regarded in any way whatever, this dream was remarkable for its coincidence with the circumstances, and greatly increased the Sisters' fears.

4. Even amid the greatest pains, Mother Frances could not suppress what had with her become a holy passion, viz. her solicitude for the poor and for the inmates of her house. In a motherly manner she inquired about their needs, and about the condition of several sick persons. Her last cares were devoted to certain needy families whom she assisted even on her death-bed. Thus she proved herself to be the great lover of the poor, and closed her life, which may well be called one continued charity, with deeds of benevolence. Occupied with these thoughts, she once remarked: "What would become of these poor people, if they should one day be in my present condition, and had nobody to come to their aid!" Her gratitude to the Sisters for their ministrations was affecting.

5. Only a few Sisters were permitted to visit her. She was able to speak but little; the few words, however, that she uttered, and her looks and pressure of the hand, manifested ineffable love and sweetness. The following words, spoken by her during these days, were noted down by the

Sisters. To Bishop Laurent she said: "I am so calm. Formerly I used to fear death, but now I am perfectly resigned. If I do have to go to purgatory, I shall not mind it: I have deserved it." Then she thanked the good prelate for all he had done for the Congregation. To a priest who visited her she expressed the following beautiful sentiment: "To be deprived one moment of the contemplation of God is a loss so infinite, that nobody should desire to prolong life." When another priest told her to pray with St. Martin: "Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy flock, I do not refuse the labor," she would not agree, but remarked: "As I am quite easy with regard to myself, I am also quite calm as regards the Congregation." — Once she said to several Sisters: "If I do leave you, I shall nevertheless remain with you. Struggle as I struggled, then we shall meet above. As God wills, dear Sisters! All for our good God!" Before the operation she observed: "I sacrificed myself entirely for the Congregation." If someone expressed condolence, she would reply: "I do not deserve sympathy."

That she suffered greatly, nevertheless, may be gathered from the remark she once made: "After all, it is difficult to persevere in patience." To good Sister Ursula she said: "Behold, dear Sister, to what a condition you find me reduced! Nevertheless, I die willingly." She often expressed her regret at causing the Sisters so much trouble; and to her cousin, Dr. Schervier, the physician, who did not spare himself in his efforts to relieve her, she once said: "Dear doctor, I ought to be entirely forgetful of myself when I consider the trouble I

am causing you." In the night after the feast of the Immaculate Conception she sent for Father Bonaventure to hear her confession, and remarked: "I must die; my dissolution is approaching." He replied: "Well, then your deliverance is at hand."

6. During the night of Wednesday and Thursday, December 14th, the two Sisters watching with Mother Frances remarked a notable increase of weakness in her. Suddenly she asked: "Will there be time to give the blessing to the Sisters after five o'clock?" And immediately she added: "I can remain with you no longer. Say farewell to all the Sisters in my name." The Superioress and senior Sisters were called, and soon, with Father Othmar, O. S. F., they all surrounded the couch of their dying mother.

The long suppressed sorrow of the Sisters now burst forth uncontrollably; their weeping, sobbing and wringing of hands is indescribable. The prayers for the dying were recited. Mother Frances followed them attentively. At half-past two the physician came and noticed that the precious life was fast ebbing away. To convince himself that she was still conscious, the priest said: "Praise be to Jesus and Mary, now and for evermore!" She replied quite distinctly: "Amen." One of the Sisters asked her if she would not bless the Sisters. She answered: "Yes!" and bowed her head. Then Sister Fulgentia asked her to pardon them all; again she replied audibly: "Yes!" And now this precious life began to extinguish calmly like a flame. Without agony, without a convulsion, without any noticeable change of features Mother

Frances breathed forth her pure soul — towards four o'clock in the morning, on the 14th of December, 1876.

In death, her features assumed a still more noble expression than they had shown in life. The impression caused by the corpse was not one of mortality, but of transfiguration. The Sisters, quite overwhelmed at their great loss, could not abstain from kissing her feet, and the dear hands that had so often blessed them, and could scarcely part with the remains of their dear Mother. About four o'clock, Mass was celebrated for the repose of her soul, during which all the Sisters offered up holy Communion for the same intention.

7. The sad intelligence of the death of Mother Frances soon spread all over the city. Multitudes came to take a last glance at the venerable corpse, and to express to the Sisters condolence at their overwhelming loss. Mother Clare Fey, the life-long friend of the servant of God, and foundress of the Congregation of the Divine Infant, immediately hastened to mingle her tears with those of the orphaned daughters of the deceased. She placed on her brow the last wreath, as she had placed the first when her friend had received the habit of St. Francis.

Clothed in the habit and decked with flowers, the venerable corpse was placed in the chapter-room. The concourse of people during the four days preceeding the burial is incredible. Thousands upon thousands came; the street was obstructed by those that had to wait before they could gain admission, so that the police had to preserve order. Those

going in were admitted by one door and dismissed through another, and the remark heard everywhere was: "Not only the Sisters, but all Aix la Chapelle lost a mother."

Empress Augusta, who had repeatedly sent expressions of sympathy during the illness, indicated her condolence by a cross of white immortelles imbedded in moss, which rested at the head of the corpse during the obsequies, and was placed on the coffin, in the name of the empress, by Canon Count Spee, at the burial.

8. The funeral took place on Monday, December 18th. The author of this sketch assisted, and will never forget the impression received then. The extraordinary appearance of the corpse, showing no signs of corruption on the fifth day after death, was a surprise to him, and the general weeping and fervent prayers deeply affected him. In the convent church, Masses were celebrated from early in the morning till noon. The corpse was enclosed in a leaden casket, surrounded by one of oak. At eleven o'clock, amid the tolling of all the bells in Aix la Chapelle, the funeral procession moved. The clergy was largely represented; also the religious Orders. The city authorities, and people of all classes and conditions followed. Children going before the bier bore over seventy wreaths, and four beautiful palms, in token of victory. Thus was she honored after death, who in life had eschewed every mark of distinction, and sought only poverty, obscurity, contempt, selecting for herself the last place. Eternally true remains God's word: "*Exaltavit humiles:* He hath exalted the humble."

The order, silence, and devotion of the immense concourse was admirable. The solemn procession seemed rather a pious triumphal pageant than a funeral cortege.

9. The universal sentiment of the inhabitants of Aix la Chapelle was expressed in an oration pronounced by Dr. Halm in a session of the city council on the 19th of December. We extract from it the following sentences: "We are called to deplore a loss which the entire city feels deeply with us. We have lost her, who for thirty-five years devoted herself entirely and in a manner never witnessed before to the welfare of our poor and sick: our townswoman, Mother Frances Schervier, died a few days ago. She had made it the object of her life to minister to the poor, to live with the poor, to devote herself to the poor. She succeeded in collecting about her a number of virgins inspired with the same sentiments, who shared with her this great and important task. For a number of years we witnessed how the good Franciscan Sisters were intent, going from house to house, on enlisting all hearts in taking part in their important social work. We saw them entering the poorest hovel, the most neglected chamber, watching entire nights at the bedside of the sick poor, becoming to the destitute what a mother is to her child. They cleansed the abodes of the sick poor, ministered to them, nourished them, and desired no other reward but the one promised by God. They did not nurse the wealthy sick, because these, as they claim, are well cared for. They devoted themselves to the poor alone, desiring nothing for

themselves and remaining amongst the poor. Such a devotion challenges universal admiration, regardless of religion or creed. I move that this assembly of members of the city council honor the memory of the deceased, and her great merits, by rising from their seats." The motion was seconded by the president, Chief Mayor Von Weise, and all present rose from their seats.

10. The veneration in which Mother Frances was held during life, seemed to increase after her death. Many, in their temporal and spiritual needs, had recourse to the tomb of the deceased, and not a few claim to have experienced extraordinary favors in consequence. Pending investigation by competent authority, we deem it advisable to omit details.

11. The Sisters, desirous of having the mortal remains of their dear Mother transferred to their convent church, petitioned the government for this purpose in 1877. Though the empress favored the plan, the petition was denied. A renewed appeal was more successful: on the 26th of May, 1880, permission was granted to transfer the body on condition that it be done privately and without public demonstrations. Accordingly, at three o'clock in the morning of July 23d, a few Alexian and Franciscan Brothers, in presence of Dr. Schervier, removed the corpse of Mother Frances from its late resting-place and transferred it to the church of the mother-house, where all the Sisters were assembled. It is difficult to describe the sentiments of joy and sorrow by which the Sisters were agitated: joy, because they had the mortal remains of their dear, faithful Mother, their

greatest treasure, in their midst; sorrow, because they were freshly reminded of their irreparable loss. The corpse was then transferred to the chapter-room. At eight o'clock it was brought back to the church, where a Mass of *Requiem* was said, and the absolution pronounced. Then it was consigned to the tomb prepared for it. The Superioress, Mother Fulgentia, had a basket of roses ready and gave each Sister a few leaves to scatter on the coffin. The relatives of Mother Frances, and a few others who were present, did the same; notably the police commissioner, who extended his hand accross three gentlemen to receive a few leaves. The ceremony was so affecting, that even the gentlemen were moved to tears. It seemed as if the deceased, who during life had selected for herself the thorns, was now to be imbedded in roses.

A document in evidence of the transfer was placed in the tomb; then the vault was closed, covered with earth, and a slab of white marble placed over it. In the wall of the church, near the tomb, was placed a memorial tablet inscribed as follows:

"*Veni, sponsa Christi, accipe coronam, quam tibi Dominus praeparavit in aeternum.*" (*Brev. Rom.*)—"Here rests in God the Venerable Mother Frances Schervier, Superioress General of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis, born at Aix la Chapelle, January 3d, 1819; died December 14th, 1876. Her remains were transferred to this church, July 23d, 1880."

12. We add an excerpt from a circular of the Superioress General, Mother Fulgentia, published on the occasion: "How happy we must deem our-

selves to have with us again in this venerable body the faithful, loving heart, which in life united with the fervency of the contemplative Mary, the active charity of the ministering Martha! And this great, expansive heart loved us, her spiritual children, with a love whose source and object was God Himself, loved us with a love incredible, loved us better, I dare say, than she was loved in return."

13. We are happy to be able to close our history of this great servant of God with a splendid memorial sketch of her life — the obituary notice written by Bishop Laurent. It resumes, *in epitome*, the substance of this sketch, reproducing, with a few touches, the faithful portrait of the deceased.

"In the year of Our Lord 1876, on the 14th of December, died at Aix la Chapelle, of hypogastric disease, fortified by the reception of the holy sacraments, the

VENERABLE MOTHER FRANCES SCHERVIER,
Foundress and Superioress General of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis.

II. Kings, IV. 29.

"Sponsored by Emperor Francis of Austria, the deceased seemed destined for eminence in the world; but God, the Lord, had provided for her a better heritage, had selected her for great achievements in His holy service. Placed at the head of her father's household after the early death of her mother, she could say with Job: "Have I denied to the poor what they desired, and made the eye of the widow wait? Have I eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof? Have I despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that had no covering? For from

my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came with me from my mother's womb." Her noble natural disposition developed in the ardor of the love of God into extraordinary charity for the poor. An enthusiastic follower of the "Poor Man of Christ," whose name she bore, she loved not only the poor, but poverty also, for the sake of the poor Jesus, Who became poor to endow us with wealth, and Who accepts as done to Himself what we do to the least of His brethren. But she could not appease the ardor of her love of Christ by the sacrifice of her person and her means; therefore she sought to multiply her faculties by enlisting sharers of her work. Leaving her father's house, she did not retire to a foreign convent to which she could not have taken her poor, but assembled around her a select company of virgins, and with them lived a life of self-denial and prayer. After five or six years of heroic preparation, she founded, with the blessing of the Church, the Congregation of Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis. Now there grew from her heart, filled with the spirit of God, a tree of divine blessings, which, taking root in her native city, extended its branches far and wide throughout the fatherland, before it was overtaken by the storm and transplanted beyond the ocean. In this new Order the servant of God renewed the miracles of old: "rich in God," she drew forth from God's treasury the fulness of bounty, scattering it far and wide. "Having nothing," she "possessed all;" needy herself, she enriched others; she always had a sufficiency of all things, yea, abundance in good works. "She was eye to the blind and foot to the

lame." Like the messenger of Our Saviour, she went about ministering to the sick, relieving the destitute, burying the dead. Enlightened in her charity by faith, she was not content to relieve corporal want, to assuage temporal grief: the needs and sorrows of the soul were her greatest concern. To convert sinners to their God and Saviour, to lead stray sheep back to the flock of the Good Shepherd, to preserve especially children from dangers to their soul — no sacrifice was too great, no labor too arduous, no trouble too wearisome. Finally, how motherly a heart she had for the associates of her vocation, the Sisters, is evinced by the tears that flowed when her life was in danger, and the prayers that ascended to Heaven. Repeatedly, these tears and prayers moved the Heart of God to prolong her life, as it were, by a miracle. Ill unto death, she once found renewal of life at the miraculous grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. But finally the time arrived when the Heavenly Bridegroom claimed His spouse, when the Just Judge would no longer debar His faithful handmaid from the merited reward. A sudden, painful illness, which submitted the frame of the servant of God to the surgeon's knife, served her as the impression of the stigmata served St. Francis, in final purification, and she died in the peace of the Lord. Many are under obligations to pray *for* her, because they owe her great things; many, also, will pray *to* her, that she may continue to be their advocate above. Resting in the peace of God, her memory lives in the Church."

APPENDIX.

Statistics of the Congregation in 1894.

EUROPE.

No.	RESIDENCE.	FOUNDED	OBJECT.
1	Aix la Chapelle: Mother House	1852	Novitiate.—Home Nursing.—Recluses.
2	Aix la Chapelle: Dominican Building. —First House of the Congregation, and Mother-house till 1852	1848	Home Nursing. — Home for Destitute Girls. — Making of Church Vestments, etc.
3	Aix la Chapelle	1873	Servants' Home.
4	Aix la Chapelle	1880	Working Women's Home.
5	Bergisch-Gladbach	1892	Home Nursing.
6	Bielefeld	1869	Hospital.—Home Nursing.
7	Bonn: St. Martin's	1851	Home Nursing.—Female Invalids' Asylum.
8	Bonn: St. Mary's	1889	Servants' Home.
9	Burtscheid	1853	Hospital.—Home Nursing.
10	Coblenz	1854	Home Nursing.—Making of Church Vestments. —Domestic Training School.
11	Cologne: St. John's	1852	Home Nursing.—Working Women's Home.
12	" Holy Family	1852	Home Nursing.—Servants' Home.
13	" St. Mary's	1863	Hospital.
14	Crefeld	1854	Home for Invalids.—Home Nursing.—Domestic Training School.—Making Church Vestments.
15	Deutz	1857	Hospital.—Home Nursing.

AMERICA.

No.	RESIDENCE.	FOUNDED	OBJECT.
1	Cincinnati, Ohio	1859	Provincial House.—Novitiate of the American Province.—Recluses.—Home Nursing.
2	Cincinnati, Ohio	1858	St. Mary's Hospital.—First Foundation in America.—Mother House till 1859.
3	Cincinnati, Ohio	1889	St. Francis Hospital for Incurables.
4	Brooklyn, N. Y.	1865	Hospital.
5	Columbus, Ohio	1863	St. Francis Hospital.
6	Columbus, Ohio	1891	Hospital and Home for Invalids.
7	Covington, Ky.	1860	Hospital and Home for Invalids.—Asylum for Homeless Girls.
8	Dayton, Ohio	1878	Hospital and Home for Invalids.
9	Hoboken, N. Y.	1864	Hospital.
10	Jersey City, N. J.	1864	Hospital.
11	Kansas City, Kans.	1887	Hospital.
12	Newark, N. J.	1867	Hospital.
13	New York, N. Y.	1865	St. Francis Hospital.
14	New York, N. Y.	1881	St. Joseph's Hospital for Incurables.
15	Quincy, Illinois	1866	Hospital.

The number of Sisters in the above institutions, at the end of 1892, not including Postulants, was, 1072; viz. 676 in Europe, and 396 in America.

No.	RESIDENCE.	FOUNDED	OBJECT.
16	Duesseldorf	1868	Home for Invalids.
17	" St. Ann's	1871	Home Nursing.-Servants Home.-Sewing School
18	" St. Mary's	1871	Hospital.
19	" Sacred Heart	1889	Home Nursing.—Sewing School.
20	Ehrenfeld	1867	Home Nursing.—Hospital.—Domestic Training School.
21	Erfurt	1864	Home Nursing.—Asylum for Homeless Girls.
22	Eschweiler	1858	Hospital.—Home for Invalids.—Home Nursing.
23	Essen on the Ruhr	1864	Home Nursing.—Servants' Home.—Protectory.
24	Euskirchen	1854	Hospital.—Home for Invalids.—Home Nursing. —Protectory.
25	Flensberg	1865	Hospital.—Girls' Asylum.
26	Frankfort on the Main	1875	Home Nursing.—Girls' Asylum.
27	Kaiserswerth	1855	Hospital.—Home for Invalids.
28	Kalk	1864	Home Nursing.—Hospital.—Training School.
29	Mayence: St. Gabriel's	1854	Home Nursing.—Servants' Home.
30	" St. Bihildis	1858	Home Nursing.
31	Mayen	1890	Home Nursing.
32	Minden	1864	Home Nursing.—Asylum for Homeless Girls.
33	Muelheim on the Rhine	1857	Hospital.—Home Nursing.
34	Ratingen	1854	Hospital.—Poor House.—Home Nursing.—Protectory.
35	Siegburg	1854	Hospital.—Home Nursing.—Protectory.
36	Stolberg	1863	Hospital.—Poor House.—Home Nursing.

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